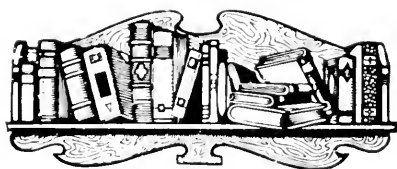


Aristokia



*A. Washington
Pezet*



GLENN NEGLEY

DUKE
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



FRIENDS OF
DUKE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

GIFT OF

Glenn R. Negley



ARISTOKIA

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Duke University Libraries

<http://www.archive.org/details/aristokia00peze>





We flew low and passed over many interesting buildings

ARISTOKIA

BY
A. WASHINGTON PEZET

ILLUSTRATED BY
TONY SARG



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

1919

Copyright, 1919, by
THE CENTURY CO.

Published, May, 1919

TO F. A. PEZET
GOOD FRIEND AND DEVOTED FATHER
IN LOVING GRATITUDE
FOR THE SUGGESTIONS AND INSPIRATION
WHICH MADE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

We flew low and passed over many interesting buildings	<i>Frontispiece</i>
On my entrance they rushed at me wildly like a pack of hounds	<i>Facing page</i> 12
I was sorry for the fracas, as I had no desire to wreck the Wigleigh home	72
"Draw a month's pay in advance in lieu of notice"	120
I wrote incessantly, for the baron was at his best .	132
Mr. Michael Fogarty gave him a shove that sent him reeling	144
"Would your lordship care to see my reference?" .	170
He seized my arm and poured out his heart-ache .	176

ARISTOKIA

ARISTOKIA

CHAPTER I

MANY years ago—to be exact, fifty years after the termination of the great World War of 1914-19—I, John Smith, American, had the great romance of my life. My name is so common that I must begin by informing my readers that I am that John Smith who received the thanks of the world and a life pension for discovering the palatable food capsule which solved the problem of the cost of living and the distribution of edible products. However, this story has nothing to do with the Smith capsule, with which you are all familiar from daily use. This is an account of my personal connection with certain historical events.

In these enlightened times few persons are ignorant of history, but I shall briefly outline the great events. During the peace conference in Paris in 1920, the world was suddenly shaken to

ARISTOKIA

its foundations by the simultaneous outbreak of socialistic revolutions in all the capitalistic countries. Everywhere the institutions that people had thought to be the very bed-rock of their so-called civilization were overthrown. By the year 1925 order had been brought out of chaos, and the Universal International Socialistic Democracy was established. In our new calendar 1925 became the year one.

At first there was great apprehension of counter-revolutions in the interest of the disgruntled aristocrats and capitalists of the various states. It soon became apparent, however, that these adherents of the old régime were rather more of a nuisance than an actual menace. They could never agree among themselves, so that their repeated attempts to regain their lost powers always ended in futile ignominy, crushed by the ridicule of the world.

Most of the people who had been through the horrors of the Great War and greater Revolution were too happy in their enjoyment of what they fatuously assumed was the millennium to trouble

ARISTOKIA

much about the outcries of a contemptible minority. As the joyous flood subsided, and the new order became the normal standard of daily life, it became increasingly evident that even the opinions of a minority should be given a hearing in an age that claimed to have enthroned the abstract sense of justice, and to have discovered the moral law in the soul of man. Certainly we who look back in calmness and fairness on that period of extraordinary transition can extend some meed of sympathy to the downtrodden few whose only fault was that they had lived too long.

There were many pathetic cases. Think for a moment of the plight of those estimable ladies of the Middle Western States whose husbands had amassed fortunes, who had spent a lifetime in acquiring a taste for luxuries, who had painstakingly learned to speak an English that was never heard on land or sea, who had struggled for years to forget how to do anything for themselves, who had at last climbed to the top of the mountain, only to find that there was no mountain and that all their hard-earned assets had become liabilities.

ARISTOKIA

"My God! don't we get our innings?" they cried.

The stronger struggled; the weaker curled up and died. There is no sadder page in history. It was through the efforts of an Anglo-American, one George Boggs, son of the chewing-gum king, that the unhappy minority at last obtained justice.

In the fifth year of our era a tract of land in central Europe was set aside by the International Congress for the exclusive use of the submerged classes. The territory was theirs in perpetuity, or, rather, as long as one of them or one of their descendants remained alive to claim it. Within its limits they could live as they pleased, making their own laws and having their own institutions, no matter how reactionary these might be. From this country they could exclude the rest of the world if they chose. But they, in turn, could not venture out of it without express permission from the International Congress.

Thousands of my readers have visited the famous ruins of Aristokia, but not all of them are old enough to have seen that wondrous city-state in

ARISTOKIA

the heyday of its glory. I saw it in all its transcendent picturesqueness. And it was there that I met romance. Her name was Gwendolyn—was and is, for she is now a very nice old lady, and we are still living together.

Before I become personal I must tell you a little more about Aristokia. It was organized much more like an exclusive country club of the past age than like a nation. Pedigree was the all-important qualification for membership, or, rather, citizenship. A self-appointed board of Royal Blues passed on all seeking admission to Aristokia. From among themselves, by secret vote, they elected an emperor, who reigned as absolute monarch for five years. His advisers were the Royal Blues and such others as he might appoint. In all matters of law, religion, and etiquette they were supreme.

Of course the Royal Blues were all the ex-kaisers, -kings, -emperors, -czars, and -princes of Europe, and their families; that is, the German royalties, for what royal family of Europe did not have German blood? These were the *ne plus*

ARISTOKIA

ultra of the nation. The *hoi polloi* was made up of non-German royalties, the lesser nobilities, the slightly illegitimate, and the army of expatriated American millionaires. There was no working class in Aristokia. All labor, whether menial or skilled, was contracted for from the outside world, and these workers lived in model villages just beyond the frontier.

The great problem for the Aristokians was that of income. Their personal fortunes were steadily dwindling as the various capitalistic enterprises in which their fortunes were invested were gradually mutualized or socialized and taken over by the International Government of the Workers of the World. They solved their problem with characteristic *savoir-faire*.

For three months each year they opened up Aristokia to the tourists of the world. These came in millions, paid admission to the country and to almost everything in the country, and lived in the hundred or so palatial hotels built for the purpose of housing them. They came to see the magnificent palaces and mansions, which most of

ARISTOKIA

you have known only as ruins; to visit the wonderful museum where were assembled all the crown jewels and royal relics of history; to gamble at the great casino, the only institution of its kind left in the world; to drink in the numerous cafés and saloons, quaint relics of the past; and they came, I must admit,—for even a social revolution cannot destroy the snobbishness and love of ermine and purple inherent in human nature,—they came to gape at the great ones, and to see the aristocrat in his native haunt. To many the imperial opera, theater, and art galleries were added attractions, for without question art, perhaps a little formalized, but still great art, flourished in Aristokia as nowhere else.

Obviously there could be no social intercourse between the Aristokians and the “nobodies,” as they termed all outsiders. There was no exception to this rule. The penalty for infringement was immediate expulsion for the offender and the ostracism of his relatives during a certain period of time.

Gwendolyn was an Aristokian, the most beau-

ARISTOKIA

tiful girl in Aristokia. How, then, did I meet her? To put it quite brutally and in the vernacular of a past age, Gwendolyn picked me up.

It was in the forty-fifth year of our era—that is, just forty-eight years ago—that I arrived in Aristokia in the company of a motley crew of tourists from all the corners of the earth. It was the first week of the open season, and I had thought that by coming early I could avoid the rush, but already thousands were pouring in.

I had been fortunate in securing a fine front room at the Hotel Hohenzollern, owned by the family of that name. It was quite the best in Aristokia; but the prices! They were amazing. The place certainly lived up to the ancient reputation of the robber barons of Brandenburg. I was undismayed, however, for I had just been granted my life pension, and was feeling opulent.

Then, too, what price was not worth paying for this experience? Remember, I was just thirty! I had been born in our era. I knew nothing of the old régime except what I had read in highly colored literature. Think of being able to step

ARISTOKIA

into the past! I crossed an imaginary line, and half a century vanished before my eyes. And what a half-century it had been, filled with more momentous changes than any that had occurred in a similar period of time in the world's history!

Try to conceive a world of kings, princes, nobles, wives, and courtezans; a world in which a gambling casino, a stock-market, saloons, and beer-gardens, generals, admirals, and millionaires were realities. Try to picture to yourself a state in which the institution of marriage existed in all its archaic potency; a world in which women did not vote and in which their equality with men was unrecognized; in which man must take the initiative in all matters of sex; a deliciously quaint world of marriages, scandals, divorces, and duels!

I shall never forget my feelings on my arrival at the Hotel Hohenzollern. Everything was strange and new to me. It was not that the building differed in outward appearance from the average New York hotel. The difference was more subtle; it was decorative rather than architectural. In New York at that time utilitarianism was ram-

ARISTOKIA

pant. Either an austere, sanitary simplicity was the fashion or a wild, bizarre Russianism, the heritage of the Revolution. But in Aristokia there was a real feeling for, an understanding of, beauty.

The lobby of the Hotel Hohenzollern was beautiful. The first thing that struck me was the total absence of all our well-known mechanical appliances and contraptions for handling baggage and securing accommodations. Instead, the most conspicuous feature was a regiment of youths in fine uniforms. On my entrance these rushed at me wildly like a pack of hounds. For an instant I recoiled; then, as they took my hand baggage from me, I realized that while they might be bent on robbery, their intention was not assault.

"This way, sir," said the youth who had hold of my pet bag. To be addressed as "sir" was a new experience for me. I took a fancy to the youth. He led the way toward a spot where a dense mass of people, other tourists, were gathered before a sort of marble altar, behind which certain lofty dignitaries hovered majestically. We stood in the crowd and patiently awaited our turn to



On my entrance they rushed at me wildly like a pack of hounds

ARISTOKIA

gain the ear of the dispenser of accommodations, who, I later discovered, was called the room clerk. Over the altar was suspended a neat gilt sign that read, "British-American Room Clerk." Farther along were signs in French, Spanish, German, and other languages. The uniformed youth caught my eye and remarked:

"The sign used to read, 'English Room Clerk,' but the Americans, Australians, and Canadians objected; so it was changed to that."

I smiled.

"And we thought nationalism was dead," I remarked aloud.

"The Irish still object," said the youth at my side.

My turn arrived, and I approached the altar. The high priest—room clerk, I should say—looked at me intently. It confused me, and I forgot what I had planned to say. I had never been looked at in this way before. The fellow had an X-ray eye that seemed to penetrate my clothes. It was most embarrassing. When at last I spoke, he turned away from me and entered into a lively

ARISTOKIA

conversation with another clerk who had simultaneously turned away from the stout man at my right. I looked at my uniformed attendant, and he smiled at me sympathetically. The room clerk was talking volubly with his friend and laughing. His accent was American. This gave me an idea.

"I'm an American," I shouted.

The only effect of this outburst was to inspire the stout man on my right to bellow, "I'm English."

"Decidedly, nationalism is not dead," I thought.

Suddenly the clerk stopped laughing, and turned to me wearily. He raised his eyebrows.

"What would you like to pay?" he asked.

"Very little," I replied, which I thought rather good.

He smiled wanly. "I have a front room on the tenth floor for fifteen dollars."

"A week?" I asked, delighted and surprised.

The clerk said something to his friend about the boring nature of professional humorists, and remarked in a far-away voice, tinged with melancholy:

ARISTOKIA

"A day. And that's *without food*," he added quickly as I was about to speak.

"Have n't you anything cheaper?"

"Yes; back room, twelve dollars. You won't like it."

"All right," I replied meekly.

The clerk pushed a book toward me, a thing of colossal size, and said, "Register," which operation consisted in writing, "John Smith, New York, U. S. A."

The clerk looked at it, and smiled at me enigmatically. I did not understand that smile at the time, but the next day I remembered it vividly.

The clerk handed a key to one of my young men in uniform, and I was led to the elevators and whisked up to my room.

The two boys placed my bags on benches, unstrapped them, opened one window, closed another, turned on the electric light in the bath-room, showed me the closets, and asked me most solicitously and in a most kindly and charming manner if I thought I should be comfortable. I assured them that everything was delightful; but as they

ARISTOKIA

made no move to go, I thought to be polite and asked them to sit down. They thanked me profusely, but explained that such action would not be consistent with their duties. There followed a pause, broken by a remark that they had made before, "Anything else, sir?" I liked that "sir." Then they held out their hands. I shook hands with each of them in turn. They looked annoyed. I was wondering in what way I had offended them when I noticed that they were pointing in an off-hand manner to a large sign on the back of the door. It read as follows:

IMPERIAL EDICT NO. 313

WITHIN THE TERRITORIES OF THE ARISTOKIAN EMPIRE TIPPING (The voluntary donation of a gratuity to a servitor) IS CUSTOMARY AND OBLIGATORY. IT WILL BE INCUMBENT UPON ALL PERSONS ACCEPTING AND ENJOYING THE HOSPITALITY OF THE REALM TO COMPLY WITH ALL THE RULES AND REGULATIONS CONCERNING TIPPING WHICH CONSTITUTE THE SPIRIT AND LETTER OF THIS EDICT. FAILURE SO TO DO WILL SUBJECT THEM TO ARREST AND PROSECUTION ACCORDING TO THE BY-LAW HERE APPENDED.

OTTO, REX IMPERATOR.

ARISTOKIA

By-Law No. 175B:

ANY ONE FOUND GUILTY IN THE IMPERIAL COURTS OF A VIOLATION OF IMPERIAL EDICT NO. 313 WILL BE FINED NOT LESS THAN \$500 AND NOT MORE THAN \$1,000, OR EXPELLED FROM THE REALM OR BOTH.

PRINCE VON HOHENLOHE,
Imp. Sect.

RULES AND REGULATIONS A VIOLATION OF WHICH WILL
CONSTITUTE AN INFRACTION OF THE EDICT

10 per cent. (ten per centum) of the amount of the charge for the service rendered is the MINIMUM TIP allowable. Smaller amounts will be refused, and the mere act of offering such a smaller amount will be interpreted as a violation of Edict No. 313.

MINIMUM SCALE OF FIXED TIPS

SERVITOR	SERVICE RENDERED	MINIMUM TIP
Bell-boys	Showing guest to room	Each \$0.50
	(10c extra for each bag.)	
Bell-boys	Any other no-charge service	Each .25
Valet	Packing and unpacking, per trunk	2.50
Valet	Packing and unpacking, per bag.	1.00
Valet	Advice regarding sartorial or other matters	1.00
Coat-check boy	Per garment checked25
Wash-room boy	Handing towel05

ARISTOKIA

Wash-room boy	Preparing water05
Wash-room boy	Dusting off with whisk-broom10
Elevator boys	(Except first trip to room) per floor & trip01*
	*(From first to tenth floor same rate as to tenth floor.)	

Guests sojourning in the hotel
one week or more will pay the fol-
lowing weekly :

Chambermaids	2.00
Room waiters	1.00

This is an extra and does not
exempt from regular 10 per
cent. charge for meals.

I turned away from the sign, abashed; I was blushing furiously. I fumbled in my pockets.

“Are you bell-boys?” I asked.

“Yes, sir,” they replied in unison.

What sensitive little fellows they were! How tactfully they had called my attention to the edict! I gave them each double the legal minimum in compensation for my stupidity. I had still much to learn. They said, “Thank you, sir,” and bowed themselves out.

I was about to unpack when a knock at the door arrested me. I opened it. A person entered,

ARISTOKIA

bowing obsequiously. He was in civilian dress, but of an odd cut. I remembered that I had seen persons in illustrations in old novels wearing similar clothes. The thing he had on was called a cutaway.

He informed me that he was the valet and insisted on unpacking my bags for me. I let him do it, a bit frightened and apologetic. He took all my suits away with him,—they needed tailoring, he explained. I thanked him and over-tipped him. He, too, called me “sir.” I thrilled to the base of my democratic spine.

The valet had imparted to me the valuable information that eight o'clock P. M. (Twenty o'clock, our time. The Aristokians still reckoned time in the old way) was the fashionable hour at which to dine.

As it was then only half-past seven, I sat down near a window to think. So many impressions had struck my consciousness in pell-mell confusion that I felt the urgent need of a quiet moment alone in which to coördinate, classify, and stow away in the proper pigeonholes of my brain the

ARISTOKIA

totally new and, to me, extraordinarily fascinating data of experience.

I thought of the bell-boys, and the valet. How strange it must be to earn a living by serving others! Yet they seemed perfectly happy. But why should n't they be? They must make a fortune in tips.

My mind drifted to the room clerk. What an odd person! How unnecessarily rude he had seemed! And yet was it rudeness? As the weeks passed, and I became a fixture at the hotel, I came to know that clerk well, and his manner to me was subsequently delightfully cordial. At the time of my meditation I had not grasped the fact that persons who deal with humanity in bulk have to adopt some form of protective armor. The clerk's manner reminded me of anecdotes told by my grandmother of the two weeks she had once spent in New York.

My gaze wandered out of the window and over the great city. Its white palaces were bathed in the warm glow of an evening sun. The green lace-work of foliage intervened everywhere, soft-

ARISTOKIA

ening the outlines of buildings. In no matter what direction one looked, a picture perfect in composition unfolded to the eye. There was not one discordant note in all that symphony of line and curve, marble and stone. It seemed to me as if all the beauty in our esthetically starved world had been concentrated here. When I thought of what the proletariat had done I shivered.

Dinner I found to be a fascinating ceremony, a rite both artistic and religious. It was not what it is fast becoming among us, an act of bodily hygiene, such as washing one's teeth or gargling. God forgive me for having helped to make it that by discovering the capsule!

I sat at a table on which there were flowers, silverware, fine china, and glass. The room was carpeted, softly lighted, and beautiful. And oh, the joy I experienced at being waited on by a real servant, one who was human enough to forget part of my order! My order! Ah, the bliss of it, to eat food, and not be obliged to swallow one of my own capsules in a glass of water, jerked at me by an automatic, hygienic contrivance.

ARISTOKIA

After a delicious meal, washed down by wine, the first I had ever tasted, I sipped my coffee, looking about me and smoking an excellent cigar. It was a source of great satisfaction to be able to smoke without fear of arrest. The constitutional amendment prohibiting the use of tobacco in all forms in the United States had just been ratified and made effective, and during the preceding months I had been very miserable. On one occasion, when some friends were smoking with me in my apartment, some one had reported smoke issuing from my windows. Rather than confess the truth and risk imprisonment, it being my second offense, we had let ourselves be deluged by the fire department.

At that time, too, the agitation for the suppression of tea and coffee as drugs had just begun. I wondered as I sat in the dining-room, watching the proletariat doing all the things they were not allowed to do in their democratic paradise, how long these repressions of the individual will would last. The frightful reaction now setting in was plainly forecast then.

ARISTOKIA

I observed the table manners of my compatriots. No wonder there were faddists who claimed that all public eating was indecent.

When I paid my bill, I overtipped the waiter grandly, and then I strolled out to the Kaiser Wilhelm II Platz and turned down the Boulevard Romanoff in the direction of the Imperial Opera-House.

I heard Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde." How beautiful, melodic, and tuneful it seemed to me! What a relief after the noisy disharmonies of the Chinaman, Wu Swang Chang, then so much the rage in other parts of the world.

I was seated in an orchestra chair toward the left of the auditorium, at the foot of one of the grand-tier boxes. During the first intermission I looked about me curiously. The greater part of the audience was composed of tourists. Aristokians did not attend the opera much during the open season; only a few of the private boxes were occupied.

Suddenly I became aware of a perceptible stir, a murmur and buzz of voices such as is caused in a

ARISTOKIA

crowd by its concentration on a common object. I turned, moved by the general impulse, in the direction of the nearest box to my left.

There stood a dapper creature in gorgeous uniform of blue and gold, his bosom resplendent with decorations. He had a black mustache, and eyes that burned with the deep glow of banked fires. His manner was graceful and courtly to an extraordinary degree. The crowd seemed tremendously impressed. I wondered if it could be the emperor.

The other occupants of the box were a middle-aged man with a monocle, a stout woman buried in jewels, which seemed to hang about her like a parasitic growth of vines on a tropical tree, and a young woman who sat with her back to the audience. She had rather lovely arms and shoulders. The effulgent military gentleman bowed low, kissed her hand, and departed.

She turned, and I became acutely aware of brown eyes and reddish-golden hair. She looked at me steadily, unflinchingly, but in a somewhat impersonal manner that was new to me, and which made me willing, even anxious, to return her gaze.

ARISTOKIA

Ordinarily I would have turned away. I was rather fed up on that sort of thing. In America I had received many offers of mating; in fact, I had been pursued by females most annoyingly.

Now that I am an old man and can speak with aloofness of myself as I was in those days, I feel no hesitation in saying that I was cursed, or blessed, as you will, with good looks. I stood six feet unshod. I was the perfect Nordic type portrayed with such persistence in the popular novels of Robert W. Chambers and other writers for the bourgeoisie of the early twentieth century. One of the principal reasons for my visit to Aristokia had been to find surcease from the importunities to which I had been subjected.

During the immortal love duet I found myself listening to Wagner with my ears while I scanned her very beautiful face with my eyes.

When the curtain fell for the second intermission, she rose and left the box. I suddenly realized that I must take a stroll in the foyer to see the crowd to advantage. But the crowd did not interest me much. Such a mob of tourists, all

ARISTOKIA

gaping at one another in their avid quest for Aristokians!

Then she passed me, and I wheeled and followed her. What carriage! What a stride! She was an Anglo-Saxon; I felt sure of it. Something about her easy, swinging gait suggested New York to me.

At the end of the foyer she turned, and passed me again. As she did, something small and white rustled to the floor, a little piece of paper. I picked it up and read:

MR. SMITH: Stop flirting with me. Do you ever walk in the Bois Bourbon, along the path that leads to the statue of Marie Antoinette? It is very nice there sometimes, at about half-past nine in the morning.

The note filled me with dread and delight. Perhaps that paradox needs explaining. She had addressed me by name; evidently she knew that I was Smith, *the* Smith of capsule fame. This was pleasantly disconcerting; I had thought myself safely incognito in Aristokia. But she had not asked me to mate with her or marry her. She had

ARISTOKIA

accused me of flirting! What did I know of that subtle art, I who had always run away?

When I returned to my seat for the third act I sought her eyes eagerly. She looked through me and beyond me without the faintest flicker of interest in my existence. At the end of the opera she swept by me haughtily, stepped into her waiting airplane, and flew away skyward without so much as a glance in my direction. This was a new experience.

In my room at the Hohenzollern I reread her note. My dread vanished, and my delight increased by leaps and bounds. She was different. She was not like any of the women I had known—women from whom one fled in instinctive dread of losing one's sacred liberty. She had been brought up and educated in the prerevolutionary ambient of Aristokia.

Her note promised, and yet it did not promise. Here at last was the flavor of the past. Here at last were romance and adventure come into my life. Here was a woman with whom I could take the initiative, one who had maidenly reserve and

ARISTOKIA

a sense of modesty, one who was not forward or aggressive. A visit to the Bois Bourbon at half-past nine would prove delectable, I felt sure.

I undressed slowly, thinking of that prerevolutionary period before the world had become safe for democracy and unsafe for males. The civilized period, they had called it. What a simple age it had been! Then the sex problem had been almost unknown.

How different is this complex age! Man's position to-day has become well-nigh intolerable. I feel confident in asserting that half of the unrest and unhappiness to-day is the direct result of the inequality of the sexual relations. In theory men and women are equal, and either may be the aggressor; but in practice what happens? No man has the slightest chance to be the aggressor. Woman always usurps the initiative. Man is terribly handicapped. Through centuries of cultivation of the art of chivalry by our forefathers it has become an instinct in present-day man. Few men are able to say "No" to a woman. When marriage existed, a man could at least let his wife

ARISTOKIA

divorce him and be rid of her in a courteous manner. But now that a mating can be legally terminated by the mere public expression of the will to do so on the part of either contracting party, no man with decent feelings can ever rid himself of a woman. The result is bondage, life-long bondage.

The more I saw of Aristokia, the more I realized that those were the good old days for us males.

CHAPTER II

IT was a glorious morning of early summer. The view from my windows sent the blood throbbing through my veins with the promise of unknown delights. Adventure was in the air, and romance in my heart. I had intended walking, but when told at the information bureau that the Bois Bourbon was in the western extremity of the city, my impatience obliged me to don my auto-peds and roll away more speedily.

I arrived at the appointed spot and thought myself in the heaven of the ancients. Beneath the statue of Marie Antoinette was a curved marble bench on which I sat. Before me unfolded an illimitable vista of exquisite landscape gardening, paths, shrubs, trees, fountains, statues, and flowers in beautiful arrangement. Birds twittered, and the cool, soft air was heavy with the scent of a million blossoms.

ARISTOKIA

I was alone. Not a soul was in sight. God forgive me for uttering the heresy, but how one of our crowds would have spoilt it all! The brotherhood of man, all our precious theories, how silly they seemed to me then!

From musing I passed to rehearsing my forthcoming meeting with her, and then back to musing. I must have kept this up for nearly half an hour. Suddenly she appeared before me more radiant than I had dreamed her.

But I had over-rehearsed the scene. No woman had ever kept me waiting before, and the novelty of the thing upset my well-laid plans. I rose speechless, and stood gaping inanely.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith," she said cheerily.

"Good morning, Miss—er—Lady—Princess," I stammered, mentally registering, "Not Miss, you fool. Of course she has a title."

"Gwendolyn," she said. "Silly name, is n't it? What's yours?"

"John."

"I'll call you Jack. But what's your surname?"

ARISTOKIA

"My surname?"

"Yes, your real name."

"My real name?" I was stupefied. "You know it," I asserted.

"Not *Smith*, not John Smith?" She looked at me incredulously.

"Yes." Why did she pretend not to know me now, I wondered.

She was laughing deliciously.

"That's really very funny," she said at last. "You know, it's our nickname for you. In Aristokia we call all the Nobodies, the outsiders, John Smith."

I was utterly crushed. My pride lay at my feet in a million pieces.

"I had thought you might have heard of me," I said plaintively. "I am the inventor John Smith—Capsule John Smith," I added, trying to piece together the remnants of my shattered vanity.

"Not the inventor of the detestable food capsule!"

"Digestible, not detestable," I interposed.

ARISTOKIA

"It's all the same. It's a beastly invention. You have destroyed one of the fine arts, and reduced an esthetic pleasure to a vulgar necessity. We never use the thing here. We eat food."

"I like food, myself, Gwendolyn."

She smiled her approval.

"Shall we walk? If you know how," she added, with a disdainful glance at my auto-peds.

"I wore them so that I could come to you quickly, Gwendolyn," I said as I removed the objectionable machines and slung them over my shoulder.

As we turned into a shady pathway I became awkwardly aware of the presence of a third person, an unprepossessing, scrawny little female dressed hideously in black. She walked at our heels like a dog. She made me horribly uncomfortable and silent.

"Have n't you anything *nice* to say to me, Jack?"

"A million things," I answered fervently.

"Then you'd better begin. You know, I am risking everything to talk to you. It is ~~expulsion~~

ARISTOKIA

from paradise to your capsule world, if we are caught, and poor mama and papa will be ostracized for months, and you 'll have to pay an enormous fine, Mr. Smith."

"Then why did you bring *her* along?" I tried to whisper.

"Who?"

I tactfully and, I think, nonchalantly indicated the annoying female behind us.

"That 's Fräulein, my chaperon."

"Yes, but—"

I was about to ask if she could be trusted, when Gwendolyn continued:

"She is blind, dumb, and deaf." I looked at the amazing female in astonishment. "She is non-existent."

I was awed. Could she possibly be a creation of my subjective mind?

"She is the symbol of a sacred convention. She is always with me, ready to serve. You will notice that she is dressed in black, like the property-man in the Chinese drama, visible in theory, invisible in fact."

ARISTOKIA

"You mean the other way around, don't you, Gwendolyn?"

"It's all the same. You'll soon get used to her."

"Never," I said, with sincerity.

"Oh, yes, you will, when you see how beautifully it works. It simplifies everything. Her presence satisfies the theory and leaves me free as to the facts. I could n't let you make love to me if anything happened to Fräulein."

"You mean I'll have to do it in front of her?"

"Of course. All our affairs and liaisons are chaperoned in Aristokia."

"Oh, Lord!"

"Royal princesses have two chaperons; the empress, three."

"In case one of them dies on the job?"

"You put it so prettily!"

For several seconds we walked on in silence; then I asked: "Are n't you a royal princess, Gwendolyn?"

"Oh, no! My ancestors were English and American. Papa is Baron Wigleigh, but we have

ARISTOKIA

certain privileges because he is descended from George Boggs, who made all this possible," she said, with a wave of her hand that was meant to include all of Aristokia.

Boggs! Chewing gum! They associated themselves in my mind. Now I understood the coat of arms on the box at the opera and on her airplane, a luxuriant grove of rubber-trees, in the center of which stood a knight in shining armor, in his right hand held high a golden spear with diamond head, his left arm protectingly about a maiden coyly dressed in mint leaves. It had puzzled me considerably.

"I may become an empress by marriage, you know."

My heart sank.

"Are you thinking of getting married?"

"Of course. Every girl does."

"I mean concretely. Is there some one?"

"Mama and papa want me to marry the Chinless One. It's the ambition of their lives."

"The Chinless One!" I echoed.

"That's my nickname for Prince Wilhelm

ARISTOKIA

Hohenzollern. Have n't you seen him? Oh, he's wonderful! His face ducks under his lower lip and runs down to meet his Adam's apple. His grandfather lost the Battle of Verdun, escaped to Holland, was interned, and later surrendered to the Allies; but he has the bluest blood in Aristokia. He's the emperor-elect."

"And your parents want to sacrifice *you*, you, the most beautiful specimen in Aristokia, to that—that product of a blight!" I was burning with indignation. "It's an outrage."

"I love your agricultural way of putting things, Jack."

"It is n't agriculture. It's eugenics."

"But that's just the point; that's how I may be allowed to marry him. Heretofore Royal Blues have been allowed to marry only Royal Blues. Now there is a tremendous effort being made to change that, so that I may be the mother of kings."

"Don't!" I groaned.

Gwendolyn then explained to me at length that the German princesses, by a strange trick of nature, had been having an extraordinary proportion of

ARISTOKIA

male children, the just retribution for Wilhelm II's vain boast that the virile German race would quickly recover from the effects of the Great War by its well-known habit of having an excess of male over female offspring. At that time only one princess of the royal blood was left, the Princess Sophia. She was anemic, and even more chinless than Willy. The learned doctors had shaken their heads dubiously at mention of the union, with grave fears for the future of the race.

As the result of this a political party had arisen which thought that expediency demanded an infusion of new blood in the person of Gwendolyn. The fight was at its height at that time.

"What does Willy say?" I asked.

"He does n't care. He's a trifle queer."

"And you, Gwendolyn?"

"Oh, I keep an open mind in the daytime and look at the stars by night."

Just then the intruding female in the rear, whose presence I had actually forgotten, uttered a guttural sound of warning in German, and Gwendolyn turned to me with outstretched hand.

ARISTOKIA

“Good-by, Mr. Smith. I must leave you now. Some one is coming. So put on your little wheels and roll away.”

“Shall I see you again, Gwendolyn?”

“If you have eyes, Jackie.” She turned and left me.

I wanted to inhale the vision of her lithe young body as she strolled away with that marvelous, self-reliant gait of hers, sex-conscious and yet unconscious. What a woman! How tantalizingly she had mixed up her Jacks and Mr. Smiths! I was in that state of mind when every Jack meant “you are mine,” and every Mr. Smith evoked the image of a cosmic capsule forever separating us. Would she turn at the curve of the path? She did not. And my last glimpse was not of her, but of her protector. I turned on the current and fled.

CHAPTER III

FOR nearly a week I kept my eyes open and looked in every direction, but I did not see Gwendolyn again.

I went every morning to the Bois Bourbon and sat in the shadow of Marie Antoinette and waited, feeding my wandering hopes with the exquisite memories of that first and only meeting.

From my windows at the Hohenzollern I scanned the heavens and searched each passing airplane with my spy-glass. Once I saw the Wigleigh coat of arms emblazoned on outspread wings high above me. My heart jumped out to meet the whirling motor, but the occupants were Mama and Papa Wigleigh, and my heart sank back with a sickening thud.

In the afternoons I walked for hours about the endless gardens, parks, and boulevards, until my legs ached and my eyes burned. The extraordi-

ARISTOKIA

nary colorfulness of the scene was a narcotic to my mental anguish, which dulled the pain of hopes deferred.

I threaded my way through the human throng, men and women of every race and color. Among them, here and there, was a sprinkling of Aristokians, easily distinguishable by the refinement of their features and their easy, graceful manner of walking, so different to our awkward, shackled strides, the result of a generation of dependence on auto-peds.

Almost all the male Aristokians wore uniforms. And such uniforms! What a contrast to the drab, unesthetic, utilitarian things worn by our International Police! All the colors of the spectrum seemed splashed in harmonious confusion upon the green-and-white background of parks and mansions. Nearly every officer's bosom (and they were all officers) was covered with a diversity of medals and decorations, and many wore silver, gold, and platinum spurs, which made a pleasant clinking sound as they strode about.

The Aristokian ladies were all attractively

ARISTOKIA

dressed, but the styles were not unfamiliar to me, for at that time the women of the proletariat aped the fashions of Aristokia, which had taken the place of Paris in all such matters. I could not restrain my smiles at the sight of these fine birds flitting by, trailing their ungainly chaperons in black.

One afternoon when walking in a comparatively quiet lane in the Bois Bourbon, to which I always returned, drawn by the lodestone of my memories, I saw coming toward me a very beautiful young woman, followed by a perfectly enormous hulk in black. By no possible flight of mental gymnastics could this chaperon have been imagined invisible. She utterly overwhelmed her petite and dainty charge. The incongruity of the spectacle was too much for me. I think I laughed out loud. At any rate, I smiled broadly. Suddenly I realized that the young lady had paused in front of me and was smiling invitingly. Confusion seized me; my grin froze, and I fled. To be arrested for any one but Gwendolyn would be absurd.

ARISTOKIA

After that I kept my smiles to myself, but I gradually came to the conclusion that the law regarding non-intercourse with the Nobodies was one honored more in the breach than in the observance.

This little episode set me to thinking. What was it that made forbidden fruit so exquisite? Why did we almost instinctively desire that which prohibitory mandates placed beyond our reach? The legend of Eve and the apple acquired a new significance in my eyes. It became at that moment the very keynote of human nature. Is not the unobtainable the supreme desire of each one of us, and does not the race progress in direct ratio to our efforts to achieve the impossible? At adolescence our dreams are illimitable. The attainments of even the greatest of us are only an infinitesimal part of our youthful ambitions. Therein lies the measure of our slow advance.

My mind rambled on as I walked about. Then, watching the Aristokians, I began to think more concretely about the problem of personal liberty. In Aristokia, the very name of which is

ARISTOKIA

only a derivative of aristocracy, though there were absurd rules, like the chaperons in black they had been reduced by the process of conventionalizing to virtual desuetude. The young ladies went blithely on their way, smiling at me when they chose, thoroughly chaperoned. It was only one item in a long list. Yet in my world the proletariat, in the name of universal freedom, was exercising a tyranny unknown in former years. What had become of the great Anglo-Saxon ideal of personal liberty? German efficiency had attacked inchoate England and America and had made them efficient in self-defense. And then? What had the years between 1919 and 1925 done to us? What a vast collective sin must now be expiated!

On the personal plane I found myself, fresh from the land of prohibitions, like many another tourist seeking relaxation, assuaging the confusion of my mental state by an assiduous sampling of alcoholic beverages. I took copious drafts of claret, burgundy, sauterne, champagne, port, and sherry.

ARISTOKIA

How many there were, each with its distinctive taste, aroma, and effect! I sipped strangely elating things called cordials—sweet, oily, burning liquids named after gentlemen who had consecrated their lives to celibacy and the Deity. It was a fascinating experience to one whose only previous knowledge of alcohol had been in the form of Kansas City Near-Beer, Bolivia (the quack remedy for all human ills), and Kentucky moonshine whisky, the unpalatable curses of our world. I found that after partaking of these beverages I became infused with something extraneous to me, a new courage, a new hope, and a conviction that on the morrow I should see Gwendolyn.

Exactly a week after my meeting with her I sat at a table in the Café Louis Quatorze. I had dined not wisely but too well, and was sipping a new cordial in abject loneliness. I felt strangely fraternal, rosily elated. I wanted to talk. I had tried the resources of my wit and wisdom on the waiter, but he persisted in answering "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," to my every comment, making a

ARISTOKIA

genuine conversation extremely difficult. He left me, to get my check, and I looked about me, smiling.

A few meters away sat a nice young chap looking as lonely as I. Suddenly I realized that I had been playing with a little box of my detestable capsules, which I had in an absent-minded moment taken out of my pocket. I took a capsule, poised it on my knife, and snapped back the blade. The capsule described a beautiful curve through the air and splashed contentedly into the young chap's glass of champagne. He cocked an eye over it in a contemplative manner. I laughed. And being delighted with my aim I repeated the performance. The second one hit him on the nose. He turned and looked at me.

"What 's the idea?" he said in English.

"I 'm lonely," I replied.

Whereat he arose and came over to me. We shook hands, and he sat down. He explained to me that he had been arrested that day and fined for speaking to some one on the boulevard.

"They fined me a hundred dollars for talking

ARISTOKIA

to an Aristokian, and a hundred dollars more for calling him 'Mister' when he happened to be a baron."

I sympathized, and paid for the drinks.

My new friend's name was Frank Hyde. He was a member of the Civic Board for the Improvement of Public Morals in Benton, Nebraska.

After we had paid our checks and slightly recovered from the staggering blow they dealt us, we decided that excitement was in order. Hyde opined that a visit to a wild Hungarian café was the thing. I voted for the casino, and won him over.

My reasons for favoring the casino were two-fold. In the first place, I might see Gwendolyn there, though of this I said nothing to Hyde. In the second place,—and it was this argument I used with effect on him,—the high cost of living in Aristokia was ruining us. The dinner I had just eaten had cost me twenty-five dollars. My room at the Hohenzollern was fifteen dollars a day. The admission to every park and garden, to every place of interest, was a dollar or more. Along the

ARISTOKIA

boulevards there were frequent toll-gates through which tourists could pass only by the payment of a dollar. Every one had to be tipped. It was appalling. At the casino, I vowed, we would make a killing, and recoup our expenses. The possibility of losing never occurred to either of us. We were not men in the mood to admit the coexistence with us of failure in any form. So we sallied forth in high spirits.

The admission to the casino was twenty-five dollars a head. We matched for it, and I lost. The main salon was a vast place done somewhat in the manner of the great ball-room at Versailles, richly carpeted, so that every footfall was muffled into silence. From the magnificent carved ceiling hung tremendous electroliers, so placed as to shed their radiance on the hundred or more tables. It was a blessed relief to one accustomed, as I was, to vague, diffused, and indirect-lighting systems to see real, glowing, warm lights. The smoke from countless cigarettes hung in gently undulating veils of blue, which accentuated the stupendous

ARISTOKIA

size of the room and gave a sense of mysterious remoteness to the scene. The air was filled with a multiplicity of sounds. The incessant clink of coins, the rustle of paper money, the scraping of the croupiers, and their droning voices intoning the eternal "*Faites vos jeux, Messieurs!*" mingled in a mighty harmony with the buzz of a thousand voices speaking in a key of suppressed excitement. The salon and all that it expressed made an impact on our consciousness never to be forgotten.

Several tables set apart were marked for Aristokians only, but I noticed many citizens of the city-empire playing at the public tables.

I started playing the red, the color of love, passion, and danger. I lost steadily. Hyde played the black, which struck me as being a rather gloomy idea. He won. When I had only a hundred dollars left I shifted to black, and lost. I then and there decided that that particular table and I were not *en rapport*. I dragged Hyde, who was nearly a thousand to the good, away with me to a table at the far end of the room.

ARISTOKIA

And then I blessed my ill luck, for there was Gwendolyn at last! Her eyes sparkled and her face was flushed as she leaned toward the wheel and gaily bet some of Papa Wigleigh's money. Papa was with her. He was not betting.

As the evening progressed, I came to the conclusion that papa was the most supremely bored person I had ever seen in my life. Later I discovered that he had been born in a casual, offhand manner, and that boredom was to him as the color of their eyes is to most men, an unalterable feature.

Hyde noticed me staring at Gwendolyn and informed me that she was the reigning beauty of Aristokia.

"The man at her right," he added, "is Prince Juan do Braganza, the best-dressed man in Aristokia, for which he was made Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Navy, and Aërial Forces. He is a gay Lothario, a home-breaker, the victorious participant in a hundred duels, the idol of the young bloods, and the adored of all the women. He has ninety-nine different uniforms and never wears the

ARISTOKIA

same one twice. He keeps thirty-three tailors busy."

I looked at the man on her right and recognized him immediately as the person who had caused such a commotion by his presence at the opera my first night in Aristokia. "What a peacock!" I thought. He was marvelous to look at. I had never seen a uniform fit so well. It was a part of him. He was the uniform.

And then as Gwendolyn glanced casually across at me without in any way acknowledging my existence, I suddenly felt shabby and ill at ease. I struggled helplessly with my collar, which I became convinced was at least two sizes too large for me.

I was trying desperately to make Gwendolyn look me in the eyes and give me some little sign when Hyde tugged my arm frantically.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! Don't stare! The man on her left, her father, he's the fellow who had me pinched to-day when I asked him the time. Let's go." And he pulled me away from the table.

ARISTOKIA

But I had no intention of leaving that table; not until Gwendolyn did, at any rate. So I upbraided Hyde for his cowardice. Was he, a citizen of the world, going to let an aristocrat, a mere baron, frighten him away? Where was his pride? What would Benton, Nebraska, think of him? My words had the desired effect, and we returned to the table, but on the opposite side, near Gwendolyn.

I was determined to talk at Gwendolyn through Hyde. It was the only plan I could hit on.

"Do you ever walk in the Bois Bourbon near the statue of Marie Antoinette?" I said to Hyde as I placed a small bet on the red. She was playing red.

Hyde was too busy betting to answer me, so I repeated the question loudly and with emphasis.

He murmured, "No," as the croupier scooped in our money.

"I do," I almost shouted, "every morning at half-past nine."

"What's the idea?" asked Hyde.

"Oh, it's so nice and lonesome there. Nobody

ARISTOKIA

comes," I said, looking at Gwendolyn reproachfully.

"Good Lord! Then why do you do it?" queried the rather puzzled Hyde.

"I go there to look for company."

"But you just said it was lonesome there," he protested.

"Yes, it is. That's the trouble." Hyde gave me a quick, searching glance.

"What did you say?" he asked. "I don't think I understood."

He was evidently very much puzzled. I seized the opportunity with avidity and fairly yelled at him:

"Yes, that's the trouble. Nobody's there." I wanted Gwendolyn to get the significance of this remark.

Baron Wingleigh had been staring at me through his monocle for some time. I must confess it had made me a little nervous, but I was determined not to be put out of countenance by the aristocratic descendant of a chewing-gum magnate. After all, one could *swallow* my capsules.

ARISTOKIA

So I looked right at the baron and added playfully, "Nobody, Nobody, *NOBODY!*"

The baron half squinted at me and turned to Don Juan.

"I wonder why Nobodies talk so beastly loud," he remarked.

Hyde nudged me with his elbow, and his eyes said, "You see the depths of displeasure you are bringing on our heads!"

After a pause, as Don Juan had not paid the slightest attention to the baron's query, he continued introspectively, with all the manner of a very bored actor reading a soliloquy of which he does not approve: "I suppose they have to keep their silly lungs in training for public speaking. A republic without oratory would be quite impossible. Democracy is government by declamation."

Don Juan ignored this, which I thought a gem of political observation. I was beginning to like the baron, but not the trend of events. In attempting to arouse Gwendolyn to indirect repartee I had started a soliloquy by her father: I deter-

ARISTOKIA

mined to try again. The baron started to speak, but I drowned him out:

"I have wandered about this city looking—looking everywhere—for a week," I said.

"Have you lost something?" Hyde asked.

"Yes, a jewel, a rare jewel."

"Too bad! Why don't you report it to the police?" suggested Hyde.

"It's all right. I've found it now."

"That's good."

"But I'm afraid I shall lose it again."

"Why don't you keep it locked up at the hotel?"

"I wish I could," I sighed, looking longingly at Gwendolyn; "but I can't control it."

"*What?*" Hyde stared at me. I knew instantly that he considered me demented.

"I wish I knew where to go to-morrow," I said after a short pause during which we waited for the spin of the wheel.

"What for?" inquired Hyde, looking dubiously at me over his shoulder.

ARISTOKIA

“To find the jewel that I shall lose again—in half an hour or so.”

That last remark settled matters for poor Hyde. From that moment until he left Aristokia he always treated me as a harmless lunatic, which simplified things immeasurably.

I wanted to see what effect my shots were having on Gwendolyn, but she was looking at Hyde, whose expression was a unique admixture of terror, bewilderment, and sympathy. It was too much for her sense of humor, and she went into peals of delicious laughter.

Braganza, feeling reassured at the effect of his wit, told Gwendolyn another anecdote about himself, which she never heard, I am sure, for he was obliged to repeat the point. Even then she laughed in the wrong place.

“I’m not going to talk any more,” I said to Hyde, who seemed greatly relieved by my decision. I turned quickly and looked at the baron, but though I could swear he was secretly elated, he gave no outward sign. “I’m going to listen. I might hear something of interest.” I wanted

ARISTOKIA

Gwendolyn to know that it was now up to her to talk at me through Braganza.

In a few moments she said, as she placed an extra-heavy bet, "Faint heart ne'er won fair lady, Juan."

Was this meant for me? I doubled my bet on her number. We won. For some time I had been winning, but I had been too interested in my mad duologue with Hyde to realize how much. Now that I hardly cared what the result of the turn of the wheel might be, I won steadily.

As I played, I listened for something more tangibly hopeful for me to fall from Gwendolyn's lips, but I listened in vain.

I watched Braganza. How attentive he was to her! With what subtle gallantry and finesse he wooed her! His conversation was a mosaic of little things which in themselves meant nothing. But, taken as a whole, what did they not mean?

And then it was that I came to a momentous decision. If ever I was to have the exquisite pleasure of talking to Gwendolyn again, I must make the opportunity, I must be the aggressor. She had

ARISTOKIA

shown the way once; it was now up to me. I had been a fool. I would seek out her house, I would shadow her. To talk with her again I would risk everything. What was a fine or two? The little wheel was making enough for me to pay a dozen fines. Gwendolyn's nearness intoxicated me and sent a thrill of courage throbbing through my veins.

"From now on I'm going to take chances," I said out loud. "I've been a fool. I'm going to plunge. I'm going to be reckless."

I bet my entire pile and won. I was now several thousand ahead of the game. As I gathered the coins and bills the croupier pushed toward me, Gwendolyn and Braganza left the table. Papa had turned away just ahead of them. His parting shot had been: "I'm going to see Prince Karl"—Prince Karl was a Hapsburg and one of the most influential Royal Blues—"about a law to prohibit oratory in public places, and thus reduce the volume of sound emitted by tourists."

I told Hyde I thought we had better quit, and though he had been losing for some time, he

ARISTOKIA

agreed. I tried to follow Gwendolyn, but Hyde wanted to go in the opposite direction, and while we discussed the matter, she was swallowed up in the crowd.

Gwendolyn had disappeared, moving in the direction of a lounging space filled with comfortable sofas and chairs and small tables at which drinks were served. It was situated in a semi-oval recess between the two wings of the great stairway that went up to the airplane entrance. The stairs were not so crowded but that I could see her, were she to leave that way. Surmising, however, that the baron was probably slaking his thirst after his arduous speechmaking at my expense, I suggested a drink, and with my eyes on the stairs led the way to the lounge.

There I found Gwendolyn and her escorts seated on a sofa. There was a third man in uniform, who, Hyde informed me, was a Bonaparte.

I ordered a thing called, for some obscure reason, a highball, and while I sipped it I wrote on the back of an envelop:

MISS SMITH: Do you ever walk in the Bois Bol-

ARISTOKIA

shevik near the statute of Leon Trotzky? It was very nice there once, at half-after nine!

I was very proud of this. She would understand, but no one else would.

Hyde had been watching me, consumed with intense curiosity. He had started nervously every time I had chuckled with self-satisfaction during the composition of my note. I could see that he was eager to ask me what I was doing, but a really charming reticence restrained him. I liked him for it.

"Just a few observations on the course of human events," I said.

"Oh." He looked at me dazed.

We finished our drinks. The men in Gwendolyn's party rose and stood for an instant, their backs to the sofa, waving and beckoning to a bearded man descending the stairs. Gwendolyn only half turned, and I caught her eye. I jumped up. As I passed her I dropped the folded envelop, and continued on my way without looking back.

I was congratulating myself on the neatness with which I had done the thing when I heard a

ARISTOKIA

queer and weird exclamation behind me. It was Hyde. I had forgotten him in my plan of campaign.

"Excuse me, old man, but you dropped this," he said and handed me the envelop.

I took it. It was unfolded.

"Did you read it?" I asked.

"Well—you see—" Hyde reddened and became inarticulate. "It was—that is—I could n't help— But I don't understand it. Who is Trotzky? I beg your pardon; it's none of my business," he added quickly, repentant.

"Certainly it is your business. You owe a great debt to Trotzky. So do I. There *should* be a statue to him. He was the great Bolshevik leader in Russia about fifty years ago. Some one killed him because he was too reactionary; but the proletariat owes a great deal to him, nevertheless."

By this time we were about twenty-five feet away from Gwendolyn. Suddenly I wheeled, swinging the unfortunate Hyde, whom I held by the arm, around with me, and started walking briskly back toward Gwendolyn, talking volubly

ARISTOKIA

all the time. I was the conjurer using patter to keep Hyde's interest centered on my words rather than on my deeds. The descendants of Boggs, Napoleon, and Manuel were showing signs of an imminent departure.

"I thought that Brisdon—" began Hyde.

I interrupted him quickly.

"That's the way they teach history in Benton, Nebraska. You thought that Brisdon, Strawood and that Washington Square chap who used to edit the 'New Democracy' were responsible for our proletariat emancipation. Well, in a way they were; but I tell you they never had an idea that they did n't get from Trotzky."

My voice had grown louder and louder, and the "Trotzky" was almost a shout. The bearded man to whom Gwendolyn and the others had waved turned quickly with a startled expression.

"'Sh!" cautioned Hyde. "He's a Russian, a Romanoff!"

Gwendolyn looked at me again. As I passed her I dropped the note at her feet. Hyde did not see it.

ARISTOKIA

Gwendolyn dropped her handkerchief, undoubtedly with the intention of picking up my note with the filmy piece of lace; but the excessive politeness and alacrity of the descendant of Napoleon forestalled her. He handed her the handkerchief, bowed, and then read the note. I heard him ejaculate something in French which sounded sacred.

Hyde gasped: "My God! have you dropped that thing again? Let's get away from here quick!"

He tugged miserably at my arm, but I stood my ground and held him. An irresistible desire to see what would happen glued me to the spot.

The baron was smoking in absolute unconcern, Don Juan was posing for the benefit of any woman who might look his way, Gwendolyn was trying desperately not to laugh, the Russian, having heard the Frenchman's religious observation, was looking concerned.

"What in heaven's name is the matter and what is that paper?" he asked Bonaparte in French. I don't know French, but I'm sure that

ARISTOKIA

he said something like that, for Napoleon's great-grand-something-or-other struggled to keep the contents of my note from his friend. But the Romanoff overpowered him, and took possession of the paper. There was a moment of tense silence.

Then Nicholas, or whatever his name was, thundered: "Who dares to write concerning a statue to the infamous murderer of my beloved great-uncles and great-aunts!"

He handed the note to Juan and began to weep.

Don Juan glanced at it in a cursory manner, passed it to Gwendolyn without comment, and then turned to sympathize elaborately with Romanoff. Gwendolyn's eyes danced, and her lips quivered. I had made a decided hit.

Then father got the note and remarked: "It's in code!"

He called one of the casino police. I was to discover later that the baron was always calling policemen.

The eyes of the group were on Hyde and me. The Frenchman pointed at us excitedly; the Rus-

ARISTOKIA

sian walked up and down debating with himself whether we should be drawn and quartered or boiled in oil.

Hyde was struggling frantically to escape my vise-like grip when the grotesqueness of the situation sent me into a spasm of uncontrolled laughter, and I shook so violently that I lost my hold on him. I expected to see him cut loose and run for Benton, Nebraska. To my utter amazement, and I shall never forgive myself for having so misjudged him, he dashed straight at the baron and the others now grouped about the policeman.

The officer was explaining to Prince Romanoff that we could not possibly be arrested for proposing a statue to Leon Trotzky; we had broken no law of Aristokia.

"Then it's a damn silly country," said the baron.

It was at this point that Hyde reached the group, talking rapidly.

"Gentleman, I know I should not address you, that I am only a Nobody, that you are great

ARISTOKIA

princes; but my poor friend is insane, though perfectly harmless. I will remove him immediately, and assure you—”

He got no further. That much had taken the august gentlemen by surprise.

By now the baron was smiling contentedly.

“This vulgar outburst simplifies matters,” he said to the policeman. “The charge is talking to Aristokians and addressing us as gentlemen instead of using our titles correctly.”

“Yes, your Lordship.” The policeman bowed, and took Hyde by the arm.

“Let me look at the fellow,” the baron demanded, looking at Hyde through his monocle. “Yes, the physiognomy is too similar for mere resemblance. This—this—does n’t wind its watch regularly; lax habits. Second offense, Officer. He stopped me in the boulevard this afternoon.”

Without further ado the policeman led Hyde away. I followed dismally. Well, anyway, Gwendolyn had read my note.

We entered a well-furnished room of nondescript character through a small, half-concealed

ARISTOKIA

door under the stairs. It was neither an office nor an anteroom. Two or three policemen were lounging about, smoking.

"I 'm so sorry, old chap," I began my excuses to Hyde.

"It 's all right."

The policeman smiled at us genially.

"Don't worry, don't worry. Baron Wigleigh never appears to press a charge. It bores him too much."

"Really?" I asked in surprise.

A policeman over by the wall stretched, yawned, and remarked: "He had three hundred and fifty tourists arrested last season, and appeared against only three of them."

Hyde breathed a sigh of relief.

"I can fix this up for you," said our policeman.

"Can you?" I asked, wondering just what the technic of the thing would be.

Then I noticed Hyde digging down into his pockets, and I understood.

"No, no," I interposed; "you are my guest."

ARISTOKIA

I took out my roll. "How much?" I asked the policeman.

"Well, your fine for talking to them would have been one hundred dollars, for using their titles wrong would have been a hundred apiece. As there were four of them, that's four hundred. Second offense doubles. That's a grand total of one thousand." He paused. "Ten per cent. of that would be one hundred."

I gave him the hundred, and we turned to go.

"Wait a bit," he said. "You'll be wanting your receipt."

My brain reeled. I took the receipt in a dream.

When I said good night to Hyde on our return to the Hohenzollern,—he was also stopping there,—he wanted to know my plans for the next day. As they were of a very confidential nature and I did not wish his companionship, I gently reminded him of my insanity by remarking that I was going jewel-hunting. It worked like a charm. With a frightened, sad look he hurried away to his own room.

CHAPTER IV

I AWOKE early the next morning, fired by my new determination. I felt arrogantly masculine. At last I had come into the noble heritage of my sex. I was to be the aggressor. I was about to go forth and conquer.

I breakfasted heartily, and then went in search of a taxiplane with a good pilot, one who knew the city and could point out to me the various residences as we flew over them.

I was interviewing several pilots when Frank Hyde came along and informed me that all of them were fools, that he knew the city well,—this was his fifth trip to Aristokia,—and would be pleased to accompany me. I did n't want him, but he looked at me so wistfully that I could not refuse his offer. I saw that he had taken a fancy to me and felt it to be his Christian duty to watch over me and keep my unbalanced mind from doing me some harm.

ARISTOKIA

We clambered aboard the car of a bright young Frenchman, Auguste, who seemed an excellent flier.

I was soon delighted to have Hyde along, for his knowledge of the city was profound, and the information I gained I later used to great advantage.

We flew low and passed over many interesting buildings: the emperor's palace; the great edifice wherein the Royal Blues held their secret conclaves; the home of the Hohenzollerns; Prince Braganza's artistic and exquisitely proportioned residence, quite the most beautiful private house in Aristokia; and a little farther west the imposing structure of Wigleigh Hall.

It stood on a slight hill, surrounded by terraced gardens and lawns declining gradually to a beautiful artificial lake. It was octagonal in shape, with no front or back, the main entrance, in the approved modern manner, being from the top. The highest part of the roof was flat and clear. It was the landing-place for planes. A broad, shallow stone stairway descended into the grand en-

ARISTOKIA

trance, a beautiful marble arch where two flunkies in livery stood on guard.

At the other side of the building was a large, glass-inclosed space, a sort of sun-room with an unobstructed view of the sky. And there the Wigleights—papa, mama, and Gwendolyn—sat at breakfast.

We were flying very low and slowly as we passed. Gwendolyn looked up, and I think she saw me. In an instant my mind was made up. I would show her the kind of lover I was. I would be reckless. I would plunge!

Reassured by my very rational conversation, Hyde was beginning to think that I had been drunk the evening before and was not really insane. So when I asked Auguste to circle over the sun-room again Hyde suspected nothing.

As we turned about, I drew out my handkerchief and very nonchalantly blew my nose. I let the handkerchief slip from my fingers, and in attempting to recover it, I leaned too far and out I tumbled.

The whole manœuver I had calculated with a

ARISTOKIA

scientific nicety of which I felt justly proud. I fell over an open space where the glass had been removed to admit the fresh morning air. Directly beneath this opening was a large, soft-looking couch where I presumed Mama Wigleigh took her daily sun-bath. I would have made a clean dive through the opening and landed squarely on this couch if Hyde had not tried to rescue me. His frantic clutch at my departing left leg deviated me from my well-chosen course just enough to make me side-swipe and smash a huge pane of glass, which clattered down with me to the floor, where most of me landed, though I did manage to keep my head on the couch.

I was sorry for the fracas, as I had no desire to wreck the Wigleigh home or antagonize papa while making my morning call.

As I fell I heard Hyde shouting: "Oh, my God! he's done for! They'll fine him a million bucks for that."

Although somewhat shaken by my rapid flight and cut up by broken glass, I was not really injured; but I decided that the thing to do was to



I was sorry for the fracas, as I had no desire to wreck the Wigleigh home



ARISTOKIA

appear unconscious. So I rolled to the floor and made myself comfortable in the debris.

In an instant Gwendolyn, who had arisen with a little cry of sympathetic horror which made my heart beat faster with keen delight, was on her knees and bending over me. Mama Wigleigh was on her feet, calling loudly for menials. But the baron never moved.

I heard him say, without any interest in his tone. "Is the beggar dead?"

Gwendolyn murmured. "Poor Smithy! He's all cut up."

I felt her soft, warm hands on my head, and her handkerchief at my temple. I trembled.

"He's moving! He's alive!" she said with evident relief and thanksgiving. I could feel her breath, and a stray lock of her intoxicating hair tickled my neck. I had an almost irresistible impulse to come to and kiss her, but I mastered it and remained supine, with eyes closed.

Mama was giving orders in stentorian tones to have me and the rest of the "frightful mess" removed to the lower regions of the establishment.

ARISTOKIA

Papa said: "Leave the boulder to the servants, Gwendolyn. Another cup of coffee, Rogers. There's ground glass in this one."

Then I was lifted up by two men, who started to carry me out. I opened my eyes and I looked for Gwendolyn, to whom I appealed mutely. She smiled at me encouragingly.

"Take him to the blue room and send for our doctor." My carriers paused.

"The blue room? Don't be ridiculous, Gwendolyn!" said her horrified mama. "Take him to the servants' quarters."

"Send him to the public hospital," interposed the baron, "and place him under arrest."

"O Papa, don't be cruel! Please let me attend to him!"

"Gwendolyn!" shrieked mama.

Papa merely stirred his fresh cup of coffee, adjusted his monocle, and remarked:

"Phœbe, your daughter appears to be more and more of a catastrophic reversion to type each day."

ARISTOKIA

"Well, it is n't *my* fault!" bellowed the baroness.

"Thank goodness, there's one member of this family with decent human feelings!" said Gwendolyn, hotly.

The baron sipped his coffee.

"Don't raise your voice, my dear. Your feelings are distressingly atavistic."

At this juncture a flunky entered, and bowed low to the baron.

"Hexcuse me, your Lordship, a person is houtside. 'E says as 'ow this person dropped hout of 'is hairplane, an' 'e 'll take 'im awye."

Papa Wigleigh waved a hand wearily, indicating that I be removed forthwith. And thus ended my little visit to Gwendolyn and her family.

The baron had not recognized me; he had scarcely looked at me. To do so would have been to evince some interest in my existence. From first to last I had been merely an annoyance, an unpleasant disturbance. If Hyde had n't sent for me, Gwendolyn might have won her point, and

ARISTOKIA

then I might have enjoyed the exquisite bliss of several hours of her company. I could have murdered Hyde.

When I was stowed away in the machine, and we were flying back to the Hohenzollern I began to laugh. Hyde thought I was delirious and told Auguste to hurry.

"Some of the scrambled glass got mixed up with the baron's breakfast," I explained to him. "That was your fault," I added.

"My fault!" Hyde looked pained.

"Yes. If you had n't pulled my leg, I'd have made the couch. I was aiming for it."

"You did n't jump on purpose?" he demanded, with growing horror.

"Certainly. How else could I see the inside of an Aristokian's house? If you had n't come for me, they would have taken me to the blue room. And *she* was going to nurse me. Now I must continue my search for my jewel."

"You'd better not talk, old man. We'll be at the hotel in a moment. Does your head ache very much?"

ARISTOKIA

“No. There ’s a song of victory in my heart.”

Hyde shook his head sadly, patted me on the hand, and murmured little soothing things to me.

When we reached the hotel they carried me to my room, put me to bed, and called a doctor, with whom Hyde had a mysterious consultation in whispers. The doctor dressed my scratches, for that ’s all they were, and said I would be as well “*as ever*” by the next day.

Hyde did not want to leave me, so I pretended to fall asleep, and then he tiptoed out of the room.

A little later a man came up and put a wire netting in all the windows. As he passed the bed he gave me a funny look. I winked at him, and he fled.

In the evening I dined in my room. Hyde came in. He seemed very much troubled. He said he had had a wireless calling him back to America. He did n’t like to leave me, and wanted to know if I did not think I had had enough of Aristokia. He would be glad to take me back to my people.

ARISTOKIA

Poor fellow! He was a real pal with a big heart. I was conscience-stricken, and tried to reassure him as to my mental condition. I don't think I succeeded, however, for he said good-by sorrowfully, with many unspoken misgivings. I vowed then and there that on my return to America I would in some way try to show my appreciation for his great kindness to me. I thought of the baron. After all, there was something to be said for the brotherhood of man.

CHAPTER V

AT about nine o'clock, shortly after Hyde had left me, there was a knock at my door. I opened it, and there stood Fräulein Chaperon. My heart jumped.

"Is she with you?" I cried.

"*Ach, nein!* Lady Gwendolyn, she cannot come to hotels."

I asked her to come in, and closed the door. She handed me a very lovely bouquet of flowers and a note.

Smithy dear, it was a mad, wonderful thing to do. You frightened me terribly. I am in disgrace with papa and mama for showing any interest in you. But I convinced papa that it would be an awful bore to try to convict you for upsetting his breakfast. Now I *know* you really want to see me. If you are well enough come to the little iron gate at the east end of our garden to-morrow night at moonrise, Fräulein will let you in. I do hope you are n't badly hurt, Jack. *Now* do you see how useful the lady in black is?

GWENDOLYN.

ARISTOKIA

I could have kissed the lady in black for bringing me this note. While I wrote an answer to it, Fräulein found a vase, filled it with water, and arranged my bouquet for me.

I do not know how I lived between then and the rising of the moon the following night. I cannot remember anything I did; and yet at the time the twenty-four hours seemed an eternity in passing.

But at last the endless waiting was over, the little iron gate had closed, and I was standing with Gwendolyn in the garden. She led me around by a narrow pathway to a bench on the opposite side of the lake. There we sat and watched the moon come up and touch the world with silver and drip molten silver across the lake.

We spoke in whispers; why, I do not know. The wind rustled softly in the trees, and the garden was filled with ghostly fragrance. Occasionally the murmuring silence was broken by the whirring purr of a motor as man on his wings rushed across the face of the moon. She was dressed in shimmering white and sat close to me.

ARISTOKIA

On the other side of her, on guard, alert, was the faithful chaperon, an angel in black, absorbed by the night.

Gwendolyn touched the scratch on my forehead. I held her hand and I kissed it. That was all. We did not speak of love, but of a thousand things which we two beings from different worlds found we had in common.

In the silence I caught myself thinking, was this I, Capsule Smith? Could this be the end of the twentieth century? How remote the age's turmoil and materialistic achievements seemed to me in this old terraced garden of mysteries!

Perhaps I could have induced Gwendolyn to fly with me to America. How quickly I would have agreed had she even intimated her willingness to adopt such a course! I might have kissed her and made ardent love to her, or she might have taken such steps herself. But if we had, what a lot of romance, adventure, and supreme happiness we should have missed! How much less would be our store of memories now!

Our modern speed is a curse; our modern sex-

ARISTOKIA

ual relations are a curse. Life for us has lost the unutterable beauty of unfoldment. Our present-day standards have robbed most women of the charm that was Gwendolyn's. She never yielded except what was asked, and then not always. She was coy. It is a word we do not understand any more.

This night was only the beginning. We had many more such meetings, some by moonlight, some in the blazing sunlight of noon, at twilight in rain and wind, and on black nights under gold besprinkled skies.

In all this time we did not speak of love except in the abstract. Instead we talked of life and of men and the ways of men in her world and in mine. We came to know each other with that subtle understanding which makes for real companionship.

At first we had flirted consciously, but that stage passed quickly. One does not flirt except casually, and we could no longer be casual. Each became interested in the other as the symbol of an

ARISTOKIA

antipodal idea. She was Aristokia; I was the Universal Proletarian Republic. From discussions in the abstract and descriptions and criticisms of our respective worlds, it was only a step, and a very natural one, to set forth and propound our ambitions.

Gwendolyn wanted to reform Aristokia. She purposed to retain all the beauty, culture, art, and fineness of that strangely esthetic and fastidious land, and to rid it of its obsolete customs, its arrant absurdities, anachronisms, and formalisms. She longed to free it from the inertia of accumulated tradition. Gwendolyn had not the remotest idea how she would accomplish all this, but she knew it to be her destiny, though at that time women in Aristokia were no better off in respect to political power than they had been in the world at large before the Great War.

My ambitions were analogous, but on a much vaster scale. I aimed at nothing less than the absolute overthrow of the existing social order, with its iniquitous tyranny of labor. Gwendolyn al-

ARISTOKIA

ways maintained that she would achieve some measure of success, but that I was doomed to failure.

One evening we stood by the lake in her garden. The reflected fires of the setting sun smiled up at us. We were tossing small pebbles into the water, watching the picture shatter in a sudden splash of color like a broken stained-glass window, then undulate and re-form.

"How many years was capital up and labor down?" asked Gwendolyn.

I started to answer this with facile levity to the effect that until the Great Revolution labor had always been down; then I thought an instant. Gwendolyn was thinking of capital and labor in the industrial phase. Men had been slaves and serfs for centuries, but capital and labor in the modern sense was the twin offspring of the union of coal and iron.

"One hundred years," I said. "From the Napoleonic wars to the Great War."

Gwendolyn looked up at me with one of her sudden smiles.

ARISTOKIA

"Then, Jackie, you will be eighty years old before you realize your ambition. You have fifty years to wait."

Would the tyranny of labor last one hundred years, I wondered. I threw a pebble into the lake and watched the chaos of color gradually through successive rhythms give place to the ordered, symmetrical quiet of a reflection identical to the one we had seen before I threw the stone.

"After each great war in the world's history that has happened," I said, pointing at the swirl of color. "Everything has gone into the crucible, and it has seemed as if something better must form afterward. But mankind has slipped back just as that reflection is slipping back, slowly, rhythmically. Nineteen-nineteen, nineteen-twenty—what an opportunity they had! But man was lymphatic, and the gods played a joke on him. They threw more pebbles!" I dashed a handful of gravel into the lake.

We were both silent for several minutes. Then Gwendolyn suggested that her world and mine

ARISTOKIA

might have to be thrown together and fused again in some mightier cataclysm.

In such interchange of ideas and opinions we spent our time together. All discussion of our present and future personal relationship was, by an unspoken understanding, taboo. I think we both felt instinctively that once love and passion entered into our relations, they would preclude all other emotions.

Slowly at the time, and with uncanny rapidity in retrospect, the summer passed.

Of course all was not smooth sailing. Two people could not meet clandestinely, in a country where such meetings were illegal, without running obvious risks and encountering hairbreadth escapes. We had many such, one of which was especially noteworthy and unforgettable. As a result of it I became at first an involuntary, and then an all-too-willing inmate of Wigleigh Hall.

We were in the garden one evening at the end of an excessively hot day. An uncanny stillness enveloped us. The air was torpid. Every now and then the leaves on the trees about us shivered

ARISTOKIA

in anticipation of the storm which was slowly approaching with long, ponderous reverberations of distant thunder and fitful flashes of lightning. We sat and watched the tempest's almost measured tread toward us. Steadily the thunder grew louder, the lightning more brilliant. It was like the coming of a vast Juggernaut with rolling drums.

We had caught the spell of the drowsing garden, and were unusually silent. Something had been said about the advisability of my taking my departure before the storm broke, but nothing had been done about the matter.

For nearly two hours we sat in fascinated contemplation of the storm's relentless oncoming, until it seemed to us that so it must continue, like some titanic treadmill, approaching always and arriving never. Gwendolyn gave expression to that thought, but the literal-minded chaperon said something to the effect that storms which kept coming eventually came.

No sooner had she spoken than nature proved her a prophet. A few big drops fell like hot

ARISTOKIA

tears from some giant, a sudden gust of wind, a wild splash, and then the deluge.

We ran frantically up the path and entered Wigleigh Hall. As we stood in a group and talked about our escape from drowning, a puddle formed on the floor.

From the very first Gwendolyn and I had agreed to observe the reasonable caution of meeting always in the garden and never in the house. So this was the first time that I had set foot under the baron's roof since my airplane visit.

As I was already in the house Gwendolyn decided that I might as well stay there until the storm had passed, for mama and papa were at a dinner party at Prince Romanoff's, from which Gwendolyn had excused herself by feigning a headache in order to spend the evening with me.

When Gwendolyn went to her room to change her dress the chaperon led me through a maze of corridors to one of the servant's rooms. There a frightened young man who was pretending not to mind the storm, was told to lend me some

ARISTOKIA

clothes. The young man asked no questions. I volunteered no information.

When I had changed, the chaperon, who had waited for me somewhere in the neighborhood, reappeared and conducted me to Gwendolyn's boudoir. I was thrilled. My heart beat faster than was its wont, and I felt a strange elation, an inexplicable exhilaration, which gave a touch of unreality to all I saw, heard, did, and said. From that moment I understood the phrase "walking on air," which I had encountered often in romantic literature and had thought rather silly, or at least over-fanciful.

The boudoir was indescribably beautiful. It seemed somehow to be permeated with Gwendolyn's personality. Every chair was comfortable, the colors were harmonious, the lights soft, low, restful. Yes, it was Gwendolyn, but a new Gwendolyn, a Gwendolyn in a fascinating negligée, intimate, appealing, entrancingly feminine, and with a soupçon of mystery about her.

I thought myself speechless, but suddenly I be-

ARISTOKIA

came aware of my voice saying, "Your boudoir, how wonderful!" and in some vague way I knew it was not the first time that I had said it. Gwendolyn was laughing, but not so much at me as with me.

"What's the matter, Jackie?"

"You're—you're so different—here," I stammered.

"That's rather a questionable compliment."

"Not at all. I knew the first time that I saw you that you would be wonderful in a thousand different ways, but how could I tell just what the wonders would be? Now I have been vouchsafed acquaintance with yet another wonder."

"It is n't I." She laughed softly again. "It's the lighting, Jackie dear. I'm glad you like my boudoir," she added pensively. "It's the only comfortable room in the house. As long as you're here now, I ought to take you for a tour of the establishment. You may never have another opportunity. Mama and papa won't be home for hours. The Romanoffs always have stuffy

ARISTOKIA

dinners. Besides, mama and papa can't possibly fly back in this storm."

I wanted to stay in the boudoir, but I knew that if I did, I should surely make love to Gwendolyn. And then, too, I was curious to see the mansion.

Gwendolyn read my thoughts, I think, for she said with an enigmatic smile:

"We can be cozy when we come back. It won't take long."

And with that she led the way. I followed, and behind us trailed the chaperon. Did n't the poor woman ever get tired of following Gwendolyn about, I wondered.

"First we'll visit mama's apartment, very gorgeous, Louis Quatorze. After you see it and realize that mama *lives* in it you'll understand her better."

"It's a room in a museum," I gasped as we entered. "She does n't sleep in that bed, does she?"

"Yes. Does n't this make mama clear to you, Jackie?"

"No. It only makes you more inexplicable than ever," I replied.

ARISTOKIA

"This is mother's boudoir," announced Gwendolyn as we entered a slightly smaller room done in the same stupendous manner. "This door leads to papa's sanctum sanctorum."

Never was contrast more abysmal. Papa's den was utterly English, heavy, dark, mahogany, rich, eternal. There were books; the man actually read! And everywhere were framed engravings of notable coats of arms.

"Father's hobby is heraldry," said Gwendolyn.

A door was open into an adjoining room.

"That's his bedroom." She pointed through the door.

I walked in. I had hardly glanced about when the chaperon emitted a noise which was the result of a groan turning into a squeak. I turned. Gwendolyn turned. The chaperon was white and trembling visibly. In the study from which we had just come stood the cause of her agitation, the baron!

"*Mein Gott! Mein Gott!*" the chaperon repeated helplessly.

Now we were in for it!

ARISTOKIA

“Quick!” said Gwendolyn, and running past me she seized one of my hands and dragged me toward the door at the opposite end of the room.

As we crossed the bedroom I remember thinking that this would be one charge that the baron would press and one arrest that he would see through to the end. I tripped over a rug.

“That you, Jenkins?” the baron called out.

We reached the door; Gwendolyn pushed me ahead of her. But it was too late; the baron was in the room.

“Fräulein, what are you doing in here?” he asked. “Gwendolyn, my dear—who’s that?” “That” meant me. My mouth opened and closed. Not a sound emerged. But it did not matter. The baron went on talking. “How’s your headache, my dear? Much better, of course. Extraordinary headaches you have lately. They come and go with such precision. Where’s Jenkins?”

He paused. The jig was up, I told myself; he suspected Gwendolyn. He had come home on purpose.

ARISTOKIA

I caught sight of the chaperon. She was petrified, like a little stone image of some pagan god. Her face was ashen gray. I looked at Gwendolyn. She was quite composed and smiled reassuringly.

“Khat-choo!”

I almost jumped out of my skin. The baron was sneezing violently.

“Got caught in the beastly storm,” he said as soon as he had stopped sneezing. “Soaking wet. Must take a hot bath or I’ll die of cold. Silly way to die, that.” Suddenly he looked at me and took a step toward me. “That face, that face!”

Instinctively my hands went up to hide the offending physiognomy.

“What’s the matter with it, papa?”

“Familiar, damned familiar! Where’s *Jenkins?*”

Gwendolyn ignored his question.

“Naturally his face is familiar. You’ve seen him before.”

“His clothes look like Jenkins’s, but his face does n’t,” said the baron.

ARISTOKIA

I looked at myself askance, and for the first time realized that I had on a valet's outfit, and was therefore reasonably safe unless the baron remembered me.

"Jenkins has left," Gwendolyn was saying. "This I presume is Smith, the new man you engaged. I came in to look for a book, and found him here."

The baron looked at me sharply.

"I engaged him?"

"Why, yes, Father; yesterday."

"Yesterday! Yesterday! Beastly bore; can't remember. Face is familiar." Another violent fit of sneezing gave a new direction to his discourse. "Daughter, Fräulein, get out! Man—whatever your name is—"

"Smith, sir," I interposed.

"'Your Lordship,' " whispered Gwendolyn.

"No, no; not Smith," continued the baron. "Draw tub, lay out pajamas, take off shoes. Good night, Gwendolyn."

The poor little chaperon fairly fled from the

ARISTOKIA

room, squeezing past Gwendolyn, who had turned in the doorway.

Gwendolyn smiled at me with her eyes and said: "Good night, *dear*."

Papa thought of course that these bounties were meant for him, and repeated vaguely. "Good night, good night."

He sat down, and I prepared to remove his shoes. The door closed. I was alone with Baron Wigleigh. I heard Gwendolyn laughing as she went down the corridor. I was far from laughing. What I did not know about the art of being a valet would have made an interesting university course.

"So somebody called Smith begat you, and now you have to go through life with a name that has become the symbol of a class. Too bad!" said the baron as I removed his right shoe.

I wondered if menials thanked barons for sympathy.

"I sha'n't call you Smith."

"What would your Lordship like to call me?"

ARISTOKIA

I asked in my best valet manner as I removed his left shoe.

"I shall name you something appropriate after I know you better. A man's name should fit him."

"Yes, your Lordship."

"Are you just agreeing or do you really think so?"

"I really think so, your Lordship."

"You think! How extraordinary!"

After a little rummaging in drawers I found his pajamas. I placed them on the bed. In a closet I discovered some slippers. Thank Heaven that barons did not differ from most mortals when it came to these matters! I put the slippers on his feet, then I went to the bath-room, a vast place in which the "tub" was a small swimming-pool sunk below the level of the room. There was a shower also, and along the walls were various gymnastic instruments.

"I like my tub at ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit," said the baron.

ARISTOKIA

Fastened to the side of the lake he called a tub was a thermometer. Water flowed into this pool and drained out continuously so that to keep the water at a temperature of ninety-eight was simply a matter of regulating the proportion of hot to cold water in the inflow. This I accomplished with little difficulty.

Presently the baron entered. He removed his bath-robe, which he must have found for himself, since I had completely forgotten the existence of such a thing, and stepped into the pool. He swam about, in some way contriving to keep his monocled eye dry.

I thought I ought to leave; but he seemed to expect me to stay, so I remained. I caught myself thinking: "All naked men look alike. What makes a baron?" Of course there was that glass eye. How the dickens did he manage to keep it in while he swam about? I wanted to ask him, but a fortunate sense of discretion restrained me.

His head bobbed up.

"You may fix me a hot toddy," he said.

ARISTOKIA

“Yes, sir—your Lordship.”

What the deuce was a hot toddy? I tried to remember, but this must be one alcoholic beverage which I had missed.

“Where shall I find it, your Lordship?”

“You can’t find *it*,” he replied and began splashing about.

I thought this over. He looked at me amused.

“*It* does n’t exist until *you* create it.”

“I meant where should I find the ingredients, your Lordship.”

“You should always say what you mean. You will find everything you require except hot water in the cellaret in my study. And over there,”—he pointed to the wash-stand,—“is a tap marked ‘hot drinking-water.’ Just a dash of lemon. I don’t like it too sour.”

Well, at any rate, I had discovered that the thing called “toddy” was made with hot water and had a dash of lemon in it.

I went into the study. It took me a little time to discover that a curious cabinet-like piece of furniture opened up and contained many bottles.

ARISTOKIA

I looked them over. There were a lot of those things called cordials, port, sherry, whisky, and a bottle the label of which bore many coats of arms and merely said, "Scotch." I had n't the faintest idea what liquid one put into a toddy or in what proportion to the hot water. This was going to be a frightful experiment. I looked at the bottles again.

I picked up a glass and held it to the light. It was immaculate. I groaned. My career as a valet hung in the balance. Then among the bottles I spied a bowl of granulated sugar. Anything with a dash of lemon in it must have a dash of sugar, too. Besides, had not the baron said, "not too sour"? I hurriedly dumped a spoonful of sugar into the glass. I returned to my perusal of the labels. Words echoed in my mind. "Father's hobby is heraldry," Gwendolyn had remarked. "Heraldry!" My poor brain repeated it. The bottle marked "Scotch" had more coats of arms on it than any other. I seized it quickly before I had time to weaken, and half filled my

ARISTOKIA

tumbler with its contents. I stirred the sugar and added the dash of lemon. Then I marched off to get the hot water.

As I passed through the bedroom the baron, now attired in pink pajamas, was clambering into bed. He looked at the glass in my hand.

"Is n't that rather a stiff dose?" he asked.

I had not the remotest idea what he meant. So I compromised.

"Does your Lordship think so?" I asked.

"Well, perhaps to cure a cold—" He nodded his head. "If I become loquacious in my sleep, it really won't matter." He waved his hand at me.

I continued into the bath-room, added the hot water, and returned. I handed the tumbler to the baron, and did n't know whether to run for my life or await the results of my concoction. He sipped it, and then looked at me.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured.

I waited, certain that death-sentence was about to be passed on the new valet.

"You made it with Scotch instead of rye!"

ARISTOKIA

I swallowed hard.

"Yes, your Lordship." I could think of no adequate defense.

"Ninety-nine persons out of one hundred would have made it with rye. I prefer Scotch. Thank you—*Watson*."

"Is that to be my name, your Lordship?" I inquired, treating the matter of the Scotch with outward indifference, but inwardly blessing my luck.

"Yes. *Watson* is a person who interprets his master's wishes and appreciates his good taste. Good night, Watson. I shall go right to sleep. You may open all the windows and put out the lights. Awaken me at eight o'clock. Remind me that I must prepare a paper for the Royal Blues."

I did as he directed. As I closed the door behind me I heard the baron murmur:

"A Watson at last! Thank God!"

Outside in the corridor I ran into the pathetic little chaperon, who stared at me with startled eyes. I don't think she had expected to see me alive again.

ARISTOKIA

“*Ach, Gott in Himmel!*” she exclaimed. “Miss Gwendolyn she would know what happened.”

“Tell Miss Gwendolyn that as a valet I am a triumphant success. My name is Watson,” I added grandly.

“*Colossal! Wundervoll!*” came in tones of admiration from the slowly reviving chaperon.

We reached the chamber in which I was to spend the night. Fräulein bade me good night and left me.

While I undressed, I decided that my days as a tourist were over. Watson chance had made me, and Watson I would remain until some *faux pas* of mine brought down on me the baron’s displeasure. I got into bed and turned out the light.

Somewhere under the same roof Gwendolyn slept, or lay awake thinking of me as I was thinking of her. There was something about this thought that sent me into Slumberland more serenely and mellifluously than I had ever gone before.

CHAPTER VI

I AWOKE to the sound of my own voice saying "Gwendolyn." For a moment I was startled by the strange room; then recollection came most pleasantly. I was in Gwendolyn's home, I could be near her always, I could see her unnumbered times a day. My eye rested on a clock. It was 7:45 A. M. I jumped out of bed and dressed hurriedly. In ecstatic contemplation of my good fortune I had almost forgotten that I was now Watson and that Watson had duties to perform.

At eight o'clock I entered the baron's room. He was snoring. I stood and watched him. How did a valet honored by the name of Watson awaken a baron? Did one call, or would it be necessary to shake him?

As I considered this problem I listened fascinated to the baronial snoring. There is something soul-absorbing about a real snore. One never

ARISTOKIA

knows just what it will do next. Now it is a purr, anon a gurgle, a chirp, a wheeze, suddenly a whistle, and then a sputter. Some one should write a treatise on the great variety and yet extraordinary rhythmic recurrence of snores.

It was two minutes past eight. I must awaken him. I *must* awaken him. The intensity of my wish brought the desired result. With a terrific cachinnation he awoke. He looked at me with one eye; the one usually adorned with his monocle he kept closed.

"Another day. Beastly bore; probably just like yesterday," he half yawned.

"Good morning, your Lordship," I said.

"Ah, Watson! I was afraid I had dreamed you."

"Two and a half minutes past eight, your Lordship."

He was pawing about on the table beside his bed with outstretched arm and hand. I jumped to his assistance, and without stopping to think gave him his glass eye. He stuck it in, and turned and beamed on me.

ARISTOKIA

"Watson, indeed!" was his comment.

The day was starting auspiciously for the new valet.

The baron slid out of bed.

"Even *you*, Watson, cannot be expected to know every man's routine. I bathe, shave, dress, in that order. You prepare my bath, lay out my clothes. And while I am dressing, you remind me of any little thing I may have forgotten."

Something he said made me shudder at the thought of possible consequences; but I resolutely put it out of my mind and turned my attention to his bath. I would cross bridges as I came to them.

"And at what temperature do we take our morning bath?" I asked glibly.

Why I had used this obsolete editorial form of expression I could not tell. I must have read it somewhere in a silly novel. The moment the phrase was out of my mouth I regretted it, for the baron was looking at me intently. At last he spoke.

"Perhaps you are right, Watson, for the perfect

ARISTOKIA

man is part of his master, and the master is dependent on the art of his man. *We* will take a cold plunge this morning, Watson."

I had scored another hit. Such good fortune was uncanny. I began to be suspicious. Surely something frightful would befall me soon to even the score of fickle chance.

All through the bath and the baron's exercising afterward a terrible thought pounded at my consciousness: Should I have to shave him? If I did, should I kill him, wound him, or disfigure him for life? What would happen?

When he finished his exercises, he turned to me.

"And now for our shave, Watson."

I quaked. This was the end; I could not do it. He was Gwendolyn's father. I must fly.

"You will find the telephone over there," he said, pointing.

With the dawn of hope in my heart I went over to the instrument. It had several buttons, which one pushed to get the desired connection, and one of these buttons was marked "Barber."

ARISTOKIA

I had escaped an impending catastrophe. My star was in the ascendant.

The barber was a little rat-like creature, with a quick, nervous manner, close-set eyes, and brick-red hair. It made me jumpy to see him with a razor in his hand, though he wielded it dexterously. He shaved the baron quickly and silently. He said, "Good morning," on entering and "Good-by," when he left; that was all.

"He's an anarchist," remarked the baron after the barber had gone. "I think he became a barber solely in order to kill people neatly. He's the best one in Aristokia."

"Is n't your Lordship afraid?" I asked.

"Certainly not. Why should he kill me? He's a super-anarchist. He wants to kill off the proletariat, not the aristocracy. No such thing as anarchy, Watson. If chaos were the social order, then chaos would be a tyranny. One can't escape it. Freedom is the great delusion. All democrats are crazy."

I considered these words worth remembering, so I wrote them down in shorthand on my cuff.

ARISTOKIA

The baron had been dressing, and was now ready for his suit. Then it was that I made my first mistake. In one closet there hung several suits. On a shelf above them were their labels, "Morning Coats." Farther along were "Sack Suits." I took down a morning coat.

The baron looked at me in pained surprise.

"Surely, Watson, we would n't wear a morning coat before noon, would we? One of my gray sack suits."

Why one should not wear a morning coat in the morning was incomprehensible to me.

"Your Lordship has a paper to prepare for the Royal Blues," I reminded him, changing the subject.

"Yes, Watson, a paper on the advisability of permitting the Royal Blues to marry outside of their caste. The Hohenzollerns have inbred to a suicidal degree." The baron was dressed. "Be in my study at ten o'clock, Watson. My secretary is a bourgeois ass, a mere amanuensis. He does n't stimulate my mind. I want to tell *you* about my paper."

ARISTOKIA

"Yes, your Lordship."

I bowed, and the baron passed out.

While the baron and the baroness breakfasted I was sequestered in Gwendolyn's boudoir, the faithful but now very jumpy chaperon on guard.

"Good morning, Gwendolyn," I began.

"I just sent for you to say good-by," she said, "for now 's your chance to skip, Jackie. We can meet in the garden to-morrow night. This evening we are giving a dinner party, and I 'm afraid my headache is overworked." I looked at her. "What 's the matter?" she inquired.

I was smiling at her indulgently.

"I 'm not going to leave, Gwendolyn. I 'm going to stay on forever as your father's valet."

"You madman! You can't!" she protested, incredulous. "Jack, you 're not serious!"

"I am. I think your father is wonderful; he thinks I 'm wonderful. We suit each other perfectly."

"Stop teasing me, Jack," she pleaded.

I told of my adventures with her father, and

ARISTOKIA

by the end of my narrative she began to weaken, finally convinced that I was in earnest.

“For your dear father’s sake let me stay. One can’t get a Watson every day, you know.”

“O Jackie,” she said, suddenly tender, laying a hand gently on my arm, “you know I’d love to have you, don’t you?” I looked into her eyes by way of answer, and my heart beat faster. “But—it’s impossible, Jack. We’ll get caught. The people dining here to-night will recognize you.”

Before either of us could convince the other, Fräulein sounded a tocsin. The baroness was approaching.

I had my morning repast in the servitor’s hall alone, every one else having breakfasted earlier. The frightened young man of the night before waited on me.

A footman and a butler, passing the entrance to the hall, scowled at me.

“’E’s the chap who fell through the glass, Hi tell yer! Hi hought to know. Hi lugged ’im

ARISTOKIA

hout," the footman informed the butler with acerbity.

"Hi 'll bet 'e 'as n't got a union-card," said the butler.

"Well, if 'e 'as n't, hout 'e goes. No scabs in this 'ouse."

With these disconcerting remarks they passed beyond earshot. I looked up from my food, for which I had suddenly lost all predilection, and caught the eye of the frightened young man, who looked more startled than ever and pretended to busy himself wiping a plate. I swallowed my coffee hurriedly and arose.

I walked to a window overlooking the garden. The baron was taking his constitutional; Gwendolyn was nowhere in sight.

Damn the unions! I must see Gwendolyn and explain this new complication. In the enjoyment of adventure in Aristokia I had quite forgotten that the proletariat ruled the world.

Although they condescended to engage themselves to the Aristokians, they were known as servants, not servants. They abided by all the cus-

ARISTOKIA

toms of nobility and etiquette, and in turn demanded implicit obedience to their union rules. They received fabulous wages, and it was tacitly understood that they were the real masters of the world. The Aristokians were in a sense political prisoners, albeit voluntary prisoners in their own country.

It being not yet ten o'clock, I wandered about the corridors of the house, hoping for a chance to see Gwendolyn and have a few words with her. Failing in my quest, I continued on my way to the baron's study, and then, as I passed the open door of the baroness's boudoir, I espied Gwendolyn, but her mother was with her.

That great dame looked at me in shocked surprise and clutched her daughter's arm.

"Who 's that?" she cried.

"Father's new valet, I believe," replied Gwendolyn, with an indifference worthy of her sire.

But the baroness knew better. She was puffing from too much breakfast and explosive with excitement.

ARISTOKIA

“Why, my dear, it’s that fellow who smashed through the roof!”

“Do you really think so? I don’t remember him,” lied Gwendolyn.

“I could n’t forget his face. Don’t you remember, my dear, I said it was a crime for Nobodies to be so good-looking?”

“I’m surprised that you should notice such things,” said Gwendolyn in papa’s best manner.

It was a hit, a palpable hit. The baroness spluttered. She gurgled something about looking on male Nobodies as one looked on furniture or sunsets or— Then she got terribly mixed and ruffled, for Gwendolyn was laughing at her.

I was standing around the corner of the corridor where I could hear without being seen, and I heard footsteps as a third person joined them.

“George!” exploded the baroness,—that was Baron Wigleigh’s Christian name; all the Boggsses had been George for generations,—“George!”

“Yes, my dear? What stupendous trifle has discommoded you now?”

“Your new valet—” began mama.

ARISTOKIA

"Ah-h, Watson!" said the baron.

"He's the person who fell through the glass and spoiled your breakfast." She got no further.

"Impossible!"

"Well, why is it impossible? I tell you, I remember him. You never remember anybody."

"It is very banal to remember people, my dear Phœbe," drawled the baron.

His wife ignored this remark and repeated vehemently: "Why is it impossible?"

"Because his name is Watson," replied the baron, starting in my direction.

I walked quickly from my hiding place into the study. The baron, in my wake, left behind him a noisily inarticulate wife. The poor woman's life was evidently a great trial to her, between the humors of her daughter and the quaintness of her husband's mind.

"Ah, Watson," chirped the baron, pleasantly. Then his gaze wandered to a corner of the room, and he nodded perfunctorily to an amazingly old-looking young man who stood beside the stenotype machine.

ARISTOKIA

“Good morning, your Lordship. Did your Lordship sleep well?” the young-old man whined in a plaintively solicitous tone.

The baron merely grunted a response. It was palpable that this worm of indefinite and indeterminate age annoyed him.

“Watson, my secretary, Mr. Ambrose Tibbets. He writes much faster than I can talk.” By which the baron meant to convey the impression that this was the only thing with which to commend his secretary.

While the baron prepared himself for his work, I examined the stenotype. It was one of the latest American models. The shorthand hieroglyphics on the keys were of the standard system, and the only way in which the machine surprised me was in the writing it produced; for instead of being in ordinary roman type, it was in longhand script. The baron was evidently trying to compromise with a utilitarian world. It greatly amused me.

Mr. Tibbits explained to me.

“His Lordship did n’t like his letters typed, so

ARISTOKIA

I suggested to him that a machine could be made that would reproduce his handwriting.”

“And Tibbits has been basking in the glory of his achievement ever since,” said the baron. The amanuensis smiled gratefully. “Tibbits, Watson is here to inspire me. He is my stimulus, the necessary offset to the mental atrophy which seizes me when I look at you.”

Ambrose smirked as if he had received a great compliment. He ceased to be a person in my eyes and became a symbol of his class. Here was the incarnation of the servility and stupidity of the bourgeoisie, a class which, although a national majority everywhere, had let itself be despoiled by minorities.

Tibbits's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had been small-salaried men. Millions of Tibbitses had let themselves be ground to dust between the extortions of capital and the oppressions of labor. They had blindly revered the one, stood in fear of the other, and earned the contempt of both. In the crucible of the Revolution their Christian virtues had availed them naught. The

ARISTOKIA

proletariat now owned the world, and the aristocracy consoled itself with Aristokia. The bourgeoisie had their virtues. What a cosmic joke, I thought!

“Aristocracy,” the baron began, and the worm turned to his keys and pounded, “is a tradition of culture and superior mentality handed down from generation to generation. Like all living things, it is dependent upon the physical well-being of its protagonists in order to flower and bear fruit. The very existence of an aristocracy and the way of living which it imposes on its members—that is n’t a good word,” interposed the baron. “I’ll get another later—imposes on its adherents—that’s better—tends to deteriorate the physical life of the caste. It can be kept in the highest degree living only by the discreet infusion from time to time of the stalwart blood of other lesser classes. So long as these infusions are absorbed by the aristocratic blood, the tradition which is aristocracy will be preserved.

“With all due respect to their Majesties and Royal Highnesses, the Aristokian Royal Blues, I

ARISTOKIA

must respectfully point out that the inbreeding among the members of the Teutonic royal houses has now brought about a condition which can be ameliorated only by the infusion of—" The baron paused. "What are you doing, Watson?" he asked.

I had been writing his speech in shorthand on scraps of paper, and I had thought him too engrossed to notice me.

"I was making a shorthand record of your Lordship's words," I replied wondering to what untoward fate I was drifting.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because everything your Lordship says is worthy of preservation."

"Really! Do you think so, Watson?" he said in his most offhand manner, but I will bet my pension that he was secretly elated.

"I consider myself richer by every word your Lordship has uttered."

The worm regarded me enviously. Now, why had n't *he* thought of that?

"You're not spoofing, Watson?"

ARISTOKIA

“Spoofing with your Lordship? Lese-majesty!”

The baron contemplated me with the expression of a child regarding a new toy.

“*Boswell!*” he exclaimed. “Not Watson—Boswell! Boswell, you have delivered me from Tibbits!” The worm squirmed uncomfortably. “Tibbits, go and see the majordomo. Draw a month’s pay in advance in lieu of notice, a month’s extra for bad behavior, and *go!* From now on Boswell will take down my utterances. Boswell, I shall want you at my side always.”

“Yes, your Lordship.”

“We must never be parted. Now, where was I?”

The baron had completely dismissed from his mind the poor cringing Tibbits, who stood by the door trying to make a farewell speech, and succeeded only in looking pathetic.

As the door closed, I felt intuitively that the worm was a model son, that he supported a widowed mother and crippled sister, and that I



"Draw a month's pay in advance in lieu of notice"



ARISTOKIA

had been unwittingly guilty of a dastardly act. I was very sad.

“Where was I?” repeated the baron.

“Your Lordship was saying that the Teutonic royal houses—”

“Ah, yes. The silly asses think they can defy the laws of nature.”

With the help of my stimulũs the baron prepared a paper which was later to throw the grand session of the Royal Blues into a turmoil of dissension, but which was eventually to win the day for the baron against the forces of reaction; for in that strange land, in so far as there were political parties, Baron Wigleigh was a liberal and a radical.

We worked until luncheon. During that meal I sat close to the baron, notebook in hand, and wrote down his effusions. The baroness admired me covertly, and Gwendolyn shot amused glances in my direction. As far as I was concerned, I had realized heaven on earth.

In the afternoon, just before she dressed for

ARISTOKIA

the dinner party, Gwendolyn and I were alone together. She urged, then begged and implored me to flee before the social event of the evening brought a catastrophe on our heads. Among the invited guests were Prince Romanoff, Prince Bonaparte, and Prince Juan. She was convinced that they would recognize and expose me. But I was obdurate and, I am afraid, cruel. I was in the clouds, and I intended to stay there until a thunder-clap brought me to earth.

CHAPTER VII

THE storm of the night before had clarified the air, and the evening was fair, with a gentle, balmy breeze. The lake in the garden was placid, and its quiet waters reflected blue skies and slow-moving, feathery, cirrus clouds. So much for nature and meteorology; but within the walls of Wigleigh Hall man in his psychic envelopment was gathering a storm analogous in its inevitability and intensity to the one nature had staged the night before. The atmosphere was surcharged with premonitions of impending disaster. Gwendolyn and the chaperon washed their hands of me.

The dinner was to be a great affair. Among those who were to attend were several Royal Blues, such as Princes Romanoff and Bonaparte, sympathetic to the baron's ideas of reform. Don Juan, another stanch adherent of the baron's

ARISTOKIA

policy—for Machiavellian reasons of his own—was not a Royal Blue; but by reason of his commandership of the army and navy and of his extraordinary personality he was a prince of vast powers. He was indeed the greatest individual force in the country, for the strength of the Royal Blues was collective. These great persons were to gather under cover of a social function to hear the baron read his masterly paper. Bonaparte and Romanoff were to sponsor it, as of course Wigleigh was not a Royal Blue and could not attend their secret deliberations.

The dining-room was truly baronial. I got an impression of a vast spaciousness, of which the table, arranged for twenty-four covers, occupied only the center. There were stone walls; a massive timbered ceiling far above; strange high-backed, elaborately carved Flemish chairs; a great Gobelin tapestry; and somewhere partly opened mullioned windows, showing a glimpse of gardens in the twilight. The soft light was from silver sconces. But the table itself almost succeeded in

ARISTOKIA

eclipsing all else—a snowy field, resplendent with platinum plate, a vision of fine lace, twinkling candles, and sparkling crystal.

As I stood, just before the arrival of the guests, gazing on all this splendor, my thoughts turned back to the latest capsule automat which had been opened just before my departure from New York and blatantly proclaimed a triumph of science and hygiene. If men had minds with which to think, here was a board at which great talk would flow. But how could one be witty, poetic, or intellectual in an automat?

Servitors in powdered wigs and gorgeous livery rushed about, noiselessly efficient.

The baroness, a little breathless, dripping jewels like some cataract in fairyland, wandered about aimlessly. The majordomo in knee-breeches and dress-coat had seen to all things.

Gwendolyn came into the room quietly. She was a cool radiance, a delectable witchery, a dazzling simplicity.

Before I had time to do more than exchange

ARISTOKIA

glances with her the baron entered, looking about vaguely as if for something he had lost. He saw me.

"Ah, Boswell, you are what I was looking for! Stand near me to-night. Have you a large notebook?"

"Yes, your Lordship."

"I shall be in fine fettle this evening."

I followed him into an anteroom off the main ball-room, a sort of small reception-room where the guests would be greeted. As the first of these arrived, Gwendolyn gave me a little look of mingled compassion for my foolhardiness, hope for our escape, and just friendly good wishes. It was the sort of look one gives to a friend who is about to try for the altitude record of the world in a new type of airplane.

The first-comers were Lord and Lady Wonalan-sett, descended from Americans; the Duke and Duchess of Biltmore, also Americans; Count Tirado, a Spaniard; and the Chevalier Van Ruysdal, a Dutchman.

The baron explained my presence airily: "Bos-

ARISTOKIA

well—what his name connotes. You may treat him as you would a chaperon. If you happen to say anything which he considers worthy of association with the other remarks recorded, he may give you immortality. The general use of Boswells would tend to restore the lost art of conversation to its proper place in social intercourse. Boswell is an incentive to say something worth while, or, if unable, to respect the silence.”

I was scribbling rapidly. Several of the guests had started perceptibly at the suggestion that what they would say might be recorded. I think it put them instinctively on their guard, for, as the baron had intimated, my presence raised the general tone of the conversation. Banalities were fewer; but, on the other hand, a painful straining to be epigrammatic obliged me to sift the spontaneous from the labored.

I was enjoying myself hugely, and troubles seemed far down on my horizon when the guests of honor of the night arrived almost simultaneously.

“His Royal Highness Prince Nicholas Roman-

ARISTOKIA

off, R.B. His Royal Highness Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, R.B. His Royal Highness Prince Juan do Braganza, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Aristokian Military, Naval and Aërial Forces," announced the flunky at the door, and in swept the triumvirate of my doom.

They paid their respects with courtly homage, first to the baroness, and then to Gwendolyn, with whom each one lingered to make some pretty speech; for all three were suitors for her hand. Romanoff was the first to greet the baron.

"My dear George," he began, and then caught sight of me and stopped dead. I heard him ejaculate something which sounded to my untutored ear like "Rumpy-biub-dubsky." I suppose it was Russian for "Great Father! Look who's here!" I never even blinked.

"Boswell," explained the baron, "invisible, like a chaperon, recorder of great words—"

Romanoff interrupted him: "Where did you find him, George?"

"Dropped on me like manna. A gift from the gods," said my master.

ARISTOKIA

"I thought so." The Russian looked at me fiercely. "We will talk about him later." He moved away.

Napoleon was next. He greeted the baron effusively, and did not notice me for some time. When he did, he seized the baron's arm wildly, crying:

"*Mon Dieu!* Look—behind you, George! There it is again!" He pointed at me. He shook his finger at me, and I am sure made me look cross-eyed.

"Boswell—" The baron began his explanation.

"No, no! He is a *lu-na-tic!*" the Frenchman insisted, with a peculiarly unpleasant emphasis on the "tic." He moved away, gesticulating freely. "Nichola-s-s! Nichola-s-s!" And then something which sounded like "Ah tew view ler foo," which I knew must be something uncomplimentary about me.

Don Juan stepped up now. His keen eyes had noticed what had gone before, and while he spoke

ARISTOKIA

to the baron, he looked at me. I pretended not to see him.

"My dear Baron, I should like to speak to you alone if that is possible," said Juan.

The baron nodded his willingness to be talked to and led the way to an adjoining smoking- and lounge-room. Don Juan followed. In the doorway the baron turned and, seeing that I had remained standing, called me. I went to him.

"I said '*alone*,' my dear Baron," insisted Juan, politely deliberate.

"Must have Boswell. You can say anything in front of Boswell. He records only remarks that are above par."

Don Juan shrugged helplessly. He was used to the baron's eccentricities.

Romanoff and Bonaparte were already in the smoking-room, talking volubly in French. They both said, "Ah!" in a disagreeable now-we've-got-you sort of way as I entered.

All three began talking at once, trying to convince the baron that I was not what I seemed.

The baron became more languorously bored

ARISTOKIA

than I had ever dreamed a human being could be. He inspired me with an awful calm. This was too wonderful an adventure. Why worry about the outcome? I regarded my accusers with unflinching countenance and impassive gaze.

The three dashed their impassioned diatribes against the implacable wall of the baron's ennui. I was Boswell, Watson-Boswell or Boswell-Watson; therefore I could not be anything else.

Dinner was announced, putting an end to the skirmish. The three great ones went off in search of their dinner partners, and the baron turned to me.

"Most men have no imagination," he remarked. "They are slaves to fatuous things they call facts."

I wondered if he really remembered me, and was just pretending not to because it suited his purpose.

Dinner was a lengthy affair of many courses. I had to stand on the baron's right, a little behind his chair, so as not to interfere with the service. I wrote incessantly, for the baron was at his best,

ARISTOKIA

making extraordinary quips about anything and everything that struck his fancy. Before the meal was over I was ravenously hungry. Fortunately, I had taken a capsule before the dinner began; otherwise the combined assault of many choice viands on my senses of sight and smell would have been too much for me.

As the ladies got up to leave the dining-room the men arose, and the baron whispered to me:

"Go and get something to eat, Boswell. Every one is too gorged to think decently now. With the ladies absent, vulgar stories will be told. *I* shall remain silent until you return."

In the pantry I found great difficulty in getting food. The servitors regarded me as an interloper in their domain, and there were frequent murmurs of "Where 's yer card? What local do yer belong to?"

I explained to the majordomo, who asked to see my union card, that I was a union all to myself; that I was not in any ordinary sense of the word a servitor. I was a Boswell, the only Boswell in the world. I was n't taking any man's job. In



I wrote incessantly, for the baron was at his best

ARISTOKIA

fact, I should be glad to teach Boswelling to any one who desired instruction in this form of service. This seemed to impress the majordomo, and he decided to feed me and tolerate me until he could communicate with, and get advice from, the union secretary in Saal.

I attribute my temporary success with the majordomo almost entirely to the fact that I had unconsciously absorbed something of the baron's unanswerable manner.

While I ate my meal I became very much engrossed in conversation with a large Cossack who explained that he was a chemist—being something of a chemist myself, I felt an added interest—and that it was his duty to examine and in some cases analyze every particle of food eaten by Prince Romanoff, as that worthy suffered from the obsession that he would some day be poisoned. What a retribution for the centuries of Romanoff misgovernment in Russia!

"Of course," the Cossack concluded, "I don't really inspect his food. He just thinks I do. No one would bother to poison *him!*"

ARISTOKIA

Soon after I returned to the baron's side the three princes accompanied him to his study, ostensibly and eventually to hear his paper, but first of all to dispose of my case.

The battle was resumed at the point at which it had been broken off by dinner. Napoleon took the field.

"But, my dear, dear George," he said, "no one enjoys your *ta-lents* more than I. But r-really, *par bleu!* Jus' becose this fellow like your *bons mots*, it is no reason why he is not insane."

The baron smiled at him benignly.

"What is insanity?" he asked.

This simple question threw the noble company into an uproar. All repeated it and then became incoherent.

"It can best be defined," resumed the baron, answering his own question as usual, "as a divergence in opinion from the majority opinion of your fellows. And in that sense every one is a little insane. But how can you justly label one person as insane when all are insane in varying degree?"

ARISTOKIA

"Granted! granted!" shouted Napoleon; "but there is a poin' where legal insanity he begin, an' dam-i-tall! You know his own frien' say he is crazee. That is enough for me."

There was a terrible pause. Napoleon struck an attitude. The baron cogitated.

"Well, for the sake of argument let us admit that Boswell is insane. But we should n't cast him out for that. You, my dear Juan, are sartorially unbalanced."

"If any one else said such a thing, my dear Baron, I would challenge him!" Juan flashed dramatically.

"I know you would. That only proves my point. Now you, Nicholas, you think your food is poisoned—"

Nicholas looked at the baron and roared: "It is. One hundred times Dimitrieff has saved my life."

"All I can say is that I should not be happy while under such a load of obligation to any man. Now you, Napoleon," he continued, smiling, "surely you have some little *faiblesse*!"

ARISTOKIA

Romanoff, who had been charging about like a bull, halted in front of the baron.

"This person is an anarchist. He wants a statue erected to Trotzky! *Trotzky!*"

"And why not a statute to Trotzky, my dear Nicholas? After all, he made all this beauty and comfort possible for us. Here we have no proletariat, no socialists, no anarchists, no troubles, no worries. Here there is no one to poison our food, Nicholas."

The Russian lapsed into his native tongue.

Don Juan came forward.

"All this is beside the point. This man acted very strangely at the casino; but he is not insane. He has some ulterior motive, and I for *one* have suspicions which, should they prove well founded—in fact, I would—" he clenched his fists, and then he lapsed into *his* native tongue.

I was rather relieved when Napoleon intervened. Juan's flow of Portuguese was murderous, and he looked at me in a way that made me fear his suspicions. He was Gwendolyn's most

ARISTOKIA

ardent suitor, the most dangerous of the three. He made me uncomfortable.

Napoleon thought to clench the matter: "Sane or insane, this person we saw at the casino. He is a toureest, a Nobodee, a John Smit', not a propair servitor."

This line of argument was getting perilously near to a union card. Would one of them think to ask me if I had one, I wondered. I must not think of it myself or I might suggest it to them.

But as usual the baron changed the entire course of the dialogue.

"I saw many people, many Smiths at the casino. I don't remember any of them. If you chaps were true to your caste, you would n't remember them either. Boswell is Boswell, and there you are."

"But, George, we do this for your sake. We cannot all be wrong an' you right," argued Bonaparte.

"That the minority is always right is the fundamental fact of your existence."

ARISTOKIA

“W’a-at!” exclaimed Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, stepping into the trap the baron’s nimble wit had set for him.

“You are an aristocrat. Aristocrats are a minority,” said the baron.

Napoleon threw up his hands wildly, and then he, too, lapsed into his native tongue.

After a little temporary confusion of a babel-like nature, Don Juan remarshaled his forces. He made a frontal attack. He came to me.

“Do you deny that you played at a table at the casino on the night of— What night was it?” he asked Romanoff, impatiently.

The Russian asked the Frenchman. None of them remembered the date.

“It does not matter,”—Juan was determined not to be put off by trifles,—“do you deny playing at a table at which were Lady Gwendolyn, the baron, and I? Do you deny dropping a note at Lady Gwendolyn’s feet?”

I quaked a bit, inwardly. He was on the right track.

Romanoff joined the inquisition: “Did you

ARISTOKIA

not say something in that note about a statue to that infamous Trotzky, murderer of my beloved ancestors?"

They crowded around me.

"An' do you deny," chipped in Napoleon, "that I pick' up the note an' read him, an' that your frien' was arrest'?"

I am by nature truthful; besides, of what use to deny these charges? They knew that I was the same man they had seen at the casino, and nothing I could say would alter their conviction.

So I replied: "Your Royal Highnesses, I deny nothing."

A mighty chorus of "Ahs" greeted this statement. All three turned on the baron gloatingly. It was a serious tactical error.

The baron merely secured his monocle more tightly in his eye and said casually:

"I knew all the time that he was the same man."

The holy alliance erupted incoherent expletives again. When it had calmed down sufficiently to become articulate, under the leadership of Juan the princes decided that inasmuch as I was a No-

ARISTOKIA

body, a Smith, and the baron had spoken with me, they had him in their power, and that unless he consented to dismiss me he would be exposed. It was their duty.

“Well,” remarked the baron, “we shall have company in exile. You have spoken to him, Juan, and so have you, Napoleon, and you too, Nicholas; and so have my daughter and my wife and several of my other guests. We shall be a merry company indeed.”

Don Juan smiled ingratiatingly. “We capitulate, my dear Baron. Send it away, and we will not report the incident.”

The baron smiled, too. “Your capitulation is premature, Juan. It will come in a moment. You let me keep my Boswell, and *I* won’t report *you!*”

“All right; but I for one shall keep an eye on him,” said Juan, with an evil look at me.

“He will end by poisoning you,” said Romanoff.

“The incident it is close’ for the presen’. You ’ave wan your poin’ temporarily, but—” Napo-

ARISTOKIA

leon hit the conjunction with premonitory emphasis.

"But, my dear Napoleon, like your illustrious ancestor, you are never satisfied. You will end in St. Helena because you would not stay in Elba."

With the above historic remark the baron closed the subject and drew forth his paper, which he read to the great men with gusto. It was much applauded, and the three highnesses left in better humor than they had been during most of the evening. Napoleon and Romanoff seemed mollified and were willing to admit that I was a useful adjunct to a great man, but Juan was mistrustful to the end.

When they had gone, I spoke to the baron: "Your Lordship, your trust in me has been so implicit that I feel I should tell your Lordship who I am."

"You are Boswell, my dear fellow, Boswell. It would be such a bore if you turned out some one else."

I was looking forward to an endless existence as

ARISTOKIA

Boswell,—well fed, well housed, amused, interested, and always near to Gwendolyn,—when there came a rather loud knock at the door that sent all my plans glimmering.

The door opened to the baron's "Come in," and three men entered, the majordomo, Ambrose Tibbits, and a third person, whose identity did not long remain obscure. He was secretary of the Aristokian Servitors' Union, and his name was Michael Fogarty. He announced these impressive facts himself in a loud, unpleasant voice, after the majordomo had made a roundabout start at an introduction.

The baron said, "Really," in his best manner. Tibbits remained huddled near the door, looking abject and miserable.

I felt that this was going to be my Marne. Where the triumvirate of aristocracy had failed, the triumvirate of the proletariat would succeed.

The majordomo told the baron very politely but unequivocally that I had no union card and therefore could not be his Boswell; that the explanation which I had made to him was invalid because I had

ARISTOKIA

in effect deprived Mr. Tibbits of his position.

The baron scowled at Tibbits.

"Tibbits is an ass, a narcotic. Boswell is a genius, a stimulant."

"If yez abuse Mr. Tibbits," shouted the Irishman, "I'll report yez to the International."

"Then I'll abuse you instead," retorted the baron. "I don't like your voice, I don't like your accent, I don't like your manners, I don't like your nationality."

"You say anything ag'in' the Irish—" thundered Fogarty.

"If you resent it," quickly interposed the baron, "I'll report *you* to the International. You are a citizen of the world, and as such are not concerned with nationality."

The secretary of the union mumbled something under his breath which sounded to me like "Oh, go to hell!"

Then Tibbits came forward and whimpered that none of this was of his doing. He had not complained, he could never complain. The baron had been more than kind to him; he had only

ARISTOKIA

happened to mention to the majordomo and the other servitors the cause of his dismissal, and then they had taken things into their own hands.

"I did n't want to come here and bother your Lordship. They made me," he whined piteously.

Mr. Michael Fogarty gave him a shove that sent him reeling, and bellowed:

"You make me sick!" He turned to the baron, pointing at me. "This feller's got to go, that's all. If Tibbits is rotten, and I think he is, we'll send yez around anither secretary."

The baron smiled at me.

"My dear Boswell, there is no bigger fool than the man who cannot admit defeat. I am a baron and an Aristokian because Mr. Michael Fogarty is afraid to let me at large in the world. It seems I cannot have Boswell. Well, so be it." He waved his hand wearily. "Send me another amanuensis."

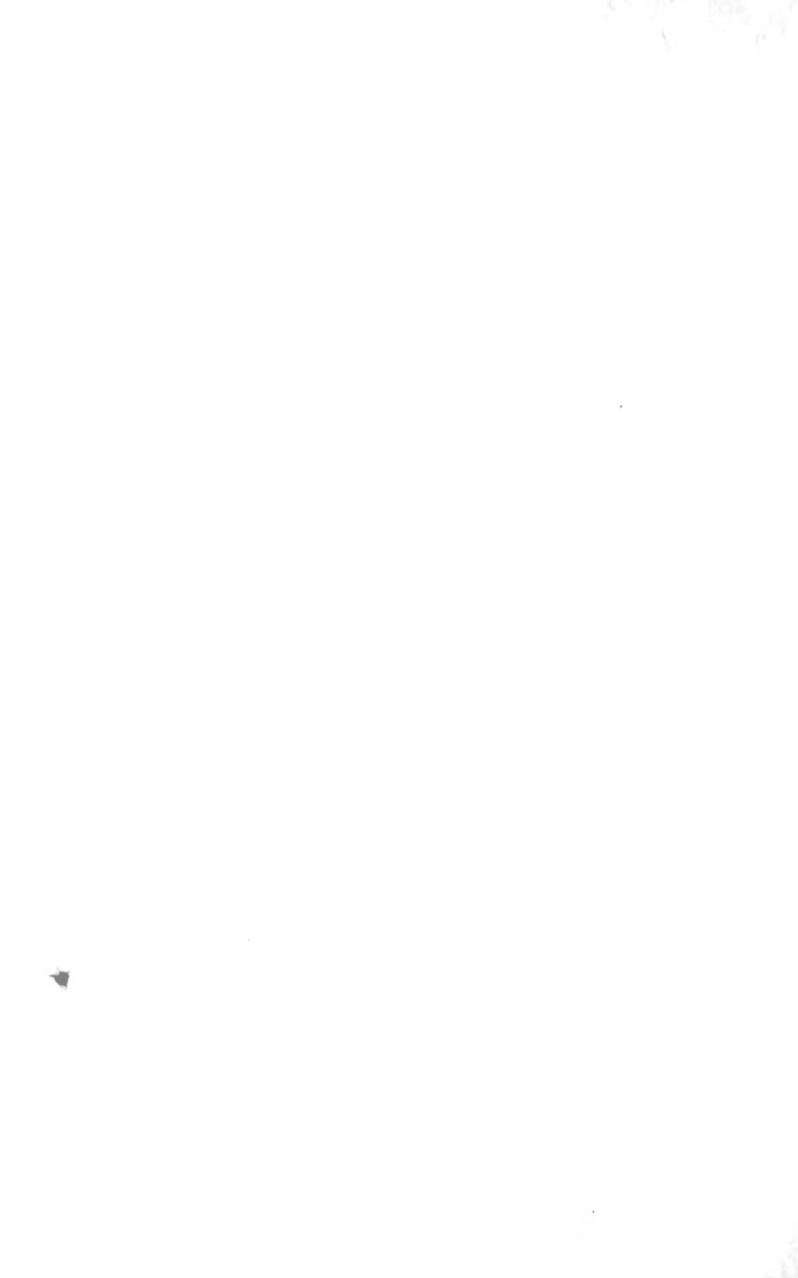
"Give me another chance," pleaded Tibbits.

The baron looked at him.

"Give him another chance, your Lordship," I said.



Mr. Michael Fogarty gave him a shove that sent him reeling



ARISTOKIA

"All right, Boswell; for your sake I will."

Tibbits became effusive, the baron bored. The majordomo and Mr. Fogarty dragged the driveling Tibbits from the room.

I looked at the baron. He looked at me. We both smiled.

"Good-by, your Lordship," I said.

"Good-by, Boswell."

He held out his hand and gave mine a short, crisp shake. I turned and left him.

I was unable to see Gwendolyn that night, but several days later we met in the garden.

The difficulties that beset our meetings were greatly augmented now that I was known by sight to every one about the house. We were together only a couple of times more, and then came the end.

It was the last night of the open season, and by midnight all the tourists must be out of Aristokia. We met at moonrise, as on the first night.

What shall I say of that never-to-be-forgotten last hour of hours in the garden? What words can I find to express its beauty and romance?

ARISTOKIA

The old, trite phrases, nearly meaningless from endless repetition, seem inadequate.

Love primordial divests us of our reason and philosophy and leaves us naked before God. The words we scoff at on other's lips and in our sober moments become for us miraculously different and dressed in new raiment. Pregnant with hitherto unimagined significance, they tumble from our lips, impelled by that mysterious force that makes all the ages of man's time live anew for every one of us in that all too fleeting moment.

And so it was that the finality of the coming separation stalked us as we walked, and stood sentinel to our thoughts when we sat down to talk. Its shadow was all about us, and the flood-gates of our emotions burst at last. We were lovers, using the words that lovers have used from the beginning of time and doing the things that all lovers do.

Gwendolyn wept at parting, and I heard the chaperon snifle too. Suddenly there were footsteps down the path. I hid in a bush. It was the baron.

ARISTOKIA

"What are you doing in this beastly damp garden at this time of the night?" he asked in his tired way.

"Looking at the moon, Papa," replied Gwendolyn.

"The moon? What's the matter with the bally thing?" he asked, adjusting his monocle to stare at it.

"It's going into an eclipse," half sobbed Gwendolyn.

"How silly!" remarked the baron as he took her arm and led her up toward the house.

I crouched in the foliage. My mind was torpid, a murky haunt for feelings without thoughts. The crunching of their departing footsteps up the gravel walk was mere sound without significance.

A few moments later the chaperon returned and let me out. I grasped her hands in both of mine and wrung them fervently. I could find no words to say to her. I heard her murmur, "*Ach Gott!*" Then the little iron gate closed behind me, and I stepped from a land of dreams to a world of realities.

CHAPTER VIII

I RETURNED to the Hohenzollern and packed hurriedly, assisted by my valet, to whom I had become accustomed. I paid my monumental bill, tipped the army of servitors who appeared suddenly from all directions to offer me unnecessary attentions, and departed.

When I crossed the frontier it was just midnight. Had I been a second later I should have been liable to arrest. I was the last tourist to leave Aristokia. No one else was taking such chances.

I was in Saal, the little German town where a goodly proportion of the servitors and workers of Aristokia lived. After leaving the bulk of my luggage at the railway station, and having been recommended a certain inn by the ticket agent, I wandered about the quiet, moonlit streets between rows of pretty little detached houses, each with its well-kept lawns and garden. At the outskirts of

ARISTOKIA

the town I came to the quaint old tavern, a ramshackle, sprawling low building which had been built years before the rise of Prussia and the mad, wild bid of Germany for world dominion.

I was shown to my room by a buxom, blonde German woman. As she left me she remarked that the tavern had been used as general headquarters during the Great War, and that Hindenburg had slept in the very bed in which I was about to spend the night.

I lay for several sleepless hours in Hindenburg's bed, staring up at the ceiling, my mind and heart filled with the cross-currents of many thoughts and emotions. Somewhere within me was a dull ache that would not be appeased.

Why had I not urged Gwendolyn to come away with me? Perhaps I should have done so if the baron had not appeared so suddenly and put such an abrupt ending to our love-making. And yet, I thought, what had I in my proletarian world to offer her comparable to the glories of Aristokia?

To what a pass our world had come! How fatuously men had hailed the revolution as the

ARISTOKIA

coming of the millennium! Would it not all have to be undone and rebuilt in a better way some day? We had overthrown the tyranny of kings, militarists, and capitalists, and enthroned instead not humanity but a caste, a class of narrow selfish workers who glorified work when truly leisure and not labor should be the ultimate goal of mankind. For without leisure there could be no time to dream, and without dreams there could be no art and no unfolding of the human spirit.

The great organized groups of workers had seized the machinery of government and driven the elect of past ages to the refuge of Aristokia. But with the drones, the parasites, and the snobs they had driven the dreamers, the thinkers, the great ones whose minds were stagnating in luxury and whose abilities were becoming atrophied in an ambient which gave them no opportunity for natural expression through conflict and struggle.

Already everywhere, particularly in my own America, where the change had been most momentous, a new unrest was apparent, and a new lower class was becoming restive under the tyr-

ARISTOKIA

anny of a utilitarian and dully monotonous régime. The wheels of vast machines were whirling, and a stupendous materialism, with unesthetic commonplaceness, was god. Somehow, through the terrible hatred of classes, that spiritual renaissance everywhere discernible in the writings of those who had lived during the Great War had been overwhelmed and lost to us.

Dreamy, moody Slavdom had pointed the way, but Russia had been conquered by Germany, and Anglo-Saxon trade-unionism had remolded the world in her own image. The faddists, the fanatics, the coiners of catch-phrases were having their little day. The world had beaten German militarism only to be conquered by German materialism and a German brand of socialism.

Hindenburg's bed creaked as I turned about and stretched restlessly.

Germans, I thought, strange race that had in successive waves since the fall of the Roman Empire poured its prolific blood over the fields of Europe, only at last to be destroyed by the Roman idea.

ARISTOKIA

If only the great minds of England and America had been heard above the din of battle! If only those who held the power of the world in their hands had been a little less blind! Why had they not seen the inevitable as it thundered toward them with the roar of a cosmic tidal wave? Among the capitalistic governing class in England and America there must have been men of imagination and understanding, men capable of reorganizing the world with their superior intelligence so that all would contribute to the toil of mankind and all would have time to dream, to look at the stars and bask in the sunlight. But they had been myopic and egotistical. They had thought only of keeping what was theirs to themselves. The blatant idealists had blown their tin horns. The tidal wave had engulfed them all, and the class with the machinery of organization had emerged triumphant from the flood and enthroned its ideals or, rather, its lack of them.

The baron's ancestors, for instance, what had they done? Now he looked at the moon and called it silly!

ARISTOKIA

Oh, cool, moonlit garden! Wonderful red-golden hair! Gwendolyn! Capsules! Capsules! How quickly they multiplied and grew to prodigious sizes, and tumbled and rolled as I struggled about, trying to reach brown eyes! Then glass crashed and the baron stared at me through a monocle as large as the moon. Hindenburg's bed creaked, and I slipped into unconsciousness.

At least I thought I did. But presently I seemed to be awake again. Hindenburg was lying in bed beside me, muttering to himself in German. He was damning the Allies for never knowing when they were beaten. He called me Wilhelm and kept repeating, "Your son is an ass, Sire." I agreed with him. He explained to me that the war would be won in the East, and by way of emphasis threw a heavy booted leg over me. His spurs dug into me.

What a stupid way to go to bed! I thought. Still, he was a great general, the savior of the fatherland. One must overlook these little eccentricities of genius.

ARISTOKIA

Then there was a frightful commotion, the whirring of an air motor, quiet, then more noise, voices, and a terrible banging.

“I told you those silly Zeppelin raids would lead to reprisals,” said Hindenburg. “They’re bombing us, Sire. Jump!”

I jumped.

CHAPTER IX

I FOUND myself sitting up, tense and taut, on the edge of the bed. The door had been opened, and the lights were burning. Before me stood the buxom German woman and a man. I gave a sidelong glance at the bed. Hindenburg had disappeared.

The woman apologized for startling me, and explained that the gentleman, Herr Schmidt, had just arrived in his airplane, that his pilot had been taken ill and was unconscious. Would I assist to carry him into the house? Certainly; I would put on some clothes.

I stared at Herr Schmidt, who was dressed in a tight-fitting suit of tweed and a leather coat. That receding face with its protruding nose and scrubby blond mustache, where had I seen it before? The crown-prince? He had been dead years. I had been dreaming. Then I knew. With a sudden rush I became fully awake. It

ARISTOKIA

was Willy Hohenzollern. What was he doing out of Aristokia, masquerading as Herr Schmidt, I wondered.

Willy spoke to me in English. He was very sorry to trouble me, but Frieda's man (Frieda was evidently the German woman) was away in town. Willy could n't lift the pilot alone. He was a wee bit drunk and wabbly, and the pilot was very big and heavy. Willy had a very polite little jag, and I took an instantaneous fancy to him.

We carried the big fellow in; that is, I carried, and Willy assisted. Almost immediately the doctor arrived.

It was altitude sickness, the doctor explained. The man's heart was affected.

"Were you flying very high, Herr Schmidt?"

Willy sobered up and looked very remorseful when he answered: "Yes, rather."

The doctor assured him that the man would live and would be all right after a complete rest of several weeks. That relieved Herr Schmidt.

He and I adjourned to the tap-room, where he insisted on treating me to drinks and supper.

ARISTOKIA

"You must try Frieda's cooking," he said. "Frieda, Hamburger steak smothered in onions, with noodles—your wonderful noodles, Frieda."

When Frieda had gone to the kitchen, Willy told me that he had been quite drunk, and had in a quaint moment instructed his pilot to go to the moon. The man had obeyed orders to the best of his ability, and had mounted higher and higher. The intense cold had partly sobered Willy and made him change his mind. They had rushed downward madly, almost plunging headlong to the ground. Willy was astounded that he too had not been overcome by the sudden change in the atmospheric pressure.

In an unguarded moment I remarked that one so used as he to dwelling in high places would not be affected. He looked at me, startled. But I went on, forgetful of the fact that I was not supposed to know who Herr Schmidt really was.

"How did you know me?" he asked, quite crestfallen. "I am in citizen's clothes. I am disguised."

Disguised! With that face! I thought.

ARISTOKIA

"I have recently been a tourist in Aristokia," I said out loud. "Your Highness is unforgettable."

"'Sh!" he hissed, and seized my arm. "Not 'your Highness' here! Call me Schmitty," he said, smiling at me.

I told him that my name was Smith. He insisted that we were brothers, and must always be Schmitty and Smithie to each other.

I asked him if he was in the habit of slipping out in this way and if he didn't think it was rather risky. I suggested that I might report him to the International. He became plaintively affectionate. He took my hand.

"Not you, Smithie! I can see it in your eyes. You are a good fellow."

I agreed, and we drank to it. The drinks were from a private stock that Willy kept in the cellar of the inn in order to circumvent the universal prohibition law. Although the American prohibitionists had finally succeeded in imposing their ideals on the rest of mankind, the enforcement of the law was very lax in those portions of central Europe adjoining Aristokia.

ARISTOKIA

Then Frieda came in with the results of her culinary efforts. They were delicious. And how Willy ate, with his whole mind and soul on the job! I decided then and there never to let him know that I was the discoverer of the food capsule.

As the meal progressed, Schmitt became loquacious. He liked them plump, he said, looking fatuously at Frieda, who squirmed and giggled. In Aristokia when they were young they were very thin, and when they grew old they got very fat. The difficulty seemed to be to catch them betwixt and between. The Royal Blues were a stuffy lot. They bored him. But Frieda was human; I was human. The Royal Blues wanted him to marry his Cousin Sophia.

“Have you seen her?” he groaned. “Some day a dog will bury her in the garden, mistaking her for his bone.”

He told me that a party headed by Baron Wigleigh wanted him to marry Gwendolyn. My heart turned a somersault at mention of her name.

ARISTOKIA

"What do you think of her?" I asked, with suppressed excitement.

"She 's beautiful, I suppose; but she has ideas and brains. Women with brains annoy me."

Poor Willy! Gwendolyn evidently frightened him.

"No, if I have my way, I shall marry Sophia, and I will get Frieda into the palace as a nurse or something. I can't do without Frieda."

Toward dawn Willy and Frieda became affectionate, and I discreetly effaced myself, and went for a stroll on the lawn in the cool morning air. As I passed a window I caught a glimpse of Herr Schmidt. Frieda was sitting on his lap. There sat the descendant of the Hun, of the scourge of Europe. To this had come the race that almost conquered the world. Strange are the ways of nature, I thought.

I went to bed, and slept until about noon, unmolested by Hindenburg.

When I returned down-stairs I found Willy, and we lunched together. He was now quite sober, but very affable. It was no good trying

ARISTOKIA

to remember that his grandfather had attempted to get past Verdun, that his great-grandfather had plunged the world into war, or that he was descended from the dismemberer of Poland. He was just a charming idiot, and I could not help liking him.

He asked me my plans. Was I returning to America? My plans were very hazy. I did not want to go home. The thought of home and the long wait for the next tourist season made something go numb inside me. Willy wanted to know if I could fly. I told him I had driven my own plane for years.

"The doctor says my pilot will be laid up for at least four weeks. You know my habits, Smithie, and I like you immensely. How would you like to be my pilot? The pay is very good." Then he added quickly. "Forgive me if the proposition offends you."

It did not offend me. I jumped at it.

"There are certain formalities," Willy explained, delighted by my acceptance. "There is a nuisance of a pilot's union. You must go to

ARISTOKIA

town, pay your dues, and be enrolled. Later I will come down and pick you out."

I put on my auto-peds and went to the union at full speed. I was in an ecstasy of exultation. Aristokia and Gwendolyn again! Blessed be the Hohenzollerns!

As I neared the office of the union, however, the thought of possible complications gave me pause. I felt sure that the success of my petition would be seriously handicapped by my previous acquaintance with Mr. Michael Fogarty. I must contrive to avoid that gentleman at all costs.

Fate smiled on me. The bellicose Irishman was secretary of the Household Servitors' Union. The Pilots' Union was an entirely different matter. The two offices were not even in the same building.

The formalities were quickly arranged. I found them mere red-tape,—just at that time there was a shortage of pilots,—and in less than an hour I was in possession of a coveted union card and a license.

That night I flew past the frontier guards and

ARISTOKIA

re-entered the land of romance as the chief pilot of Prince William Hohenzollern, Emperor-Elect of Aristokia.

Just before we landed, Willy remarked casually: "Don't call me Schmitt in front of people, and be sure you use every one's title correctly. They are sticklers about such things here."

"By the way, may I grow a mustache and beard?" I asked him.

He was a little surprised at my strange request. He smiled, then acquiesced, and patting me affectionately on the back, he sneaked into his palace by a secret entrance. The liaison door, he called it. I soon discovered that all houses in Aristokia were provided with these emergency exits, and very useful they were, too.

CHAPTER X

AS Willy's chief pilot, I saw the inside of Aristokia as no tourist could have seen it in a hundred visits. I discovered, to my great joy, that the Aristokians treated not only the chaperons and Boswells but all servitors as if they were non-existent. They discussed their most intimate affairs in my presence.

I had been back in Aristokia a week without having had an opportunity to see Gwendolyn or communicate with her in any way. I had flown over the Wigleigh mansion and grounds, but had never caught a glimpse of her. I was getting desperate.

Then Willy decided that it was time for a little trip to Frieda. I left him with her, and flew back to Aristokia to get our oilskins, which I had purposely forgotten, although a storm had been forecast for the following day. Knowing that I

ARISTOKIA

should not be needed for at least twenty-four hours, I remained in Aristokia.

At breakfast time the next morning I flew over the sun-room. I had intended dropping a note through the opening, but it was a rather cold morning and the glass was closed over. I made circles high above the room and watched the family at breakfast. Gwendolyn left the table before mama or papa. I continued to fly about, however, hoping that she might return after they had left, and that in some way I might be able to attract her attention; but she did not come back.

I was about to give up in despair when something made me look toward the hangars. There I saw one of the Wigleigh planes emerging and recognized it as the small one that Gwendolyn used. The pilot brought it to the entrance. I waited. Fearing that he might be watching me, I pretended to be working over my engine.

Presently she came out of the door, accompanied by her chaperon. She was going out alone. My chance had come at last. I put the

ARISTOKIA

engine out of commission and volplaned down to rest beside her machine.

Stepping up to her pilot, I explained my fictitious trouble and asked for certain tools. When I removed my headgear, Gwendolyn emitted a little cry. The chaperon's quick warning checked her, and regaining her self-possession, she directed the man to go to the hangar for what I needed.

"Jack, you darling! You have come back to me!" Her eyes were moist and sparkling, and in my heart there was a wild tumult.

I told her briefly of my strange meeting with Willy. How she laughed!

Then, as the man reappeared, she said, "Come to the garden to-night."

She flew away immediately. I fooled a bit with the engine, as a precaution in case any one had observed me, and then, after replacing the tools in the hangar, went my way.

The storm arrived that night on schedule time. The wind howled and moaned through the trees, lashing the cold rain, which fell in sheets, into fine spray.

ARISTOKIA

The garden was dark and filled with the sound of dripping foliage. The soggy earth was covered with a slippery carpet of fallen leaves. Gwendolyn and I clung to each other in the dark and exchanged cold, wet kisses. Water dripped off her lovely hair and ran down my neck in chilly little rivulets. She shivered. I held her close, and water oozed out of our clothes as from a sponge. But we did not care. We would have stood there hours unmindful of the elements, aware only of our love, hearing only each other's heart-beats. But the chaperon reminded us that papa and mama were at home and that on such a night there could be no excuse for Gwendolyn to be out in the garden.

We made hurried plans for future meetings. We arranged that in so far as my duties as Willy's pilot would permit, I was to fly over the sun-room at a certain time each day. Gwendolyn would contrive to be there, and we would then exchange signals as to whether we could meet in the garden that night.

During the ensuing weeks we spent many bliss-

ARISTOKIA

ful hours together. Never once in the half-dozen meetings did we speak or even think of the future. We lived in the glamour of an exquisite present, enjoying its sweets with the unquestioning simplicity of children.

Then one day Willy informed me that his pilot was well again, and that he felt in duty bound to take the man back into his service. He hated to part with me, and would miss me, but no doubt I was desirous of returning to America. He handed me a check at parting. It was a little present, he said, a bonus for my faithful services. I did n't want to accept it.

"Please take it," he urged. "You have a right to it, I assure you."

I glanced at it, and then felt no further compunction. Photographed on my mind's eye was an imperial edict, first brought to my attention by two over-sensitive bell-boys. The check was a dividend Willy had just received from the Imperial Aristokian Tipping Monopoly, Inc.

That evening I told Gwendolyn that I must leave Aristokia and begged her to fly with me.

ARISTOKIA

She had other plans. She was dissatisfied with her pilot,—she would engage me in his place. I consented. My beard was by this time a luxuriant growth. In my flying-togs, with close-fitting headgear and goggles, I was unrecognizable. And I should not often come in contact with any of the household. Besides, I was no longer a tourist but a duly enrolled servitor under the ægis of the Pilots' Union. I felt reasonably safe. It would be time enough to take Gwendolyn away with me when our affair was discovered, which I felt was an inevitable eventuality. Sooner or later we should grow careless and be caught. Then there would be fireworks and a hasty exit. Our surreptitious meetings appealed to my sense of adventure, and though I did not realize it at the time, the atmosphere of Aristokia was a narcotic which had dulled the edge of my ambitions and sent my youthful dreams into the limbo of forgotten things.

Before I could enter Gwendolyn's service, it was necessary that I be formally interviewed by the baron. Although my beard had greatly

ARISTOKIA

changed my appearance, and I knew that the baron's attitude to a person of my class would be quaintly indifferent, it was not without many qualms that I knocked at the door of his study one morning at about ten o'clock. He was seated at his desk, toying with some papers. I breathed a sigh of relief when I found that the officious Ambrose Tibbits was not present.

I stood for several minutes, and he said no word. Becoming very restless, I coughed. He looked up.

"Have you a cold?" he remarked casually.

"No, your Lordship."

"Then don't cough. It's so beastly misleading."

He returned his stare to his papers. I was unrecognized.

"I'm the new pilot," I ventured.

"Oh, yes. Can you fly?"

"Expertly, your Lordship."

"Expertly,—m'm. Think of that! It's always struck me as being rather a bore. You have



"Would your lordship care to see my reference?"

ARISTOKIA

to keep your mind on the bally thing, don't you? I tried it once."

"Would your Lordship care to see my reference?" I inquired, drawing the letter from Willy out of my pocket and handing it to him. He glanced over it.

"His Highness is enthusiastic," he remarked, and added, "I sha'n't hold that against you, my man." He gave the letter back to me. "You don't drop your h's, do you?"

"Oh, no, your Lordship."

"That's rather unfortunate. The best servants always do. However, I suppose it is n't a really necessary accomplishment for a pilot—"

"Is everything satisfactory then, your Lordship?"

"When you say *everything*, I presume you refer to yourself."

I nearly smiled. This characteristic utterance carried me back to the day I had been his Boswell.

"Yes, your Lordship."

ARISTOKIA

"Commendable egotism," he drawled.

I thought the interview was over. I started to bow myself out when the baron arose, came around the desk, adjusted his monocle, and stared at me.

"Where have I seen you before?"

"Driving Prince Wilhelm's plane, your Lordship," I replied quickly.

"No; you are vaguely associated in my mind with some unpleasant disturbance."

Good Lord! Was he going to remember the ground glass in his coffee, of all things? I must have needed a shave the morning of my memorable plunge. He shook his head.

"You are strangely reminiscent to me; but, then, all you Smiths look alike." He waved his hand with his typical weary gesture to signify that the interview was at an end. Then it was that I made a fatal blunder. I should have remained silent. Instead, I spoke.

"Good-by, your Lordship."

Once before I had used these words to the baron, and the sound of my voice must have awakened

ARISTOKIA

memories ; for he started, and adjusted his monocle more securely.

“That voice !” he murmured, then called me back into the room. He looked at me with a kindly twinkle in his eye.

“Is n’t your name Boswell ?” he asked me.

For an instant I had a mad impulse to say yes, but my native caution overcame my sentiment and I answered :

“No, Smith, your Lordship ; John Smith.”

“Ah, yes, Smith ; not Boswell. Too bad. I like the name Boswell.”

I could n’t look him in the eyes again, so I slipped out quietly and closed the door.

CHAPTER XI

A FEW days later the baron achieved the preliminary step in the realization of his great ambition.

Under pressure from the learned men of science the Royal Blues surrendered, and agreed to the betrothal of Lady Gwendolyn to the emperor-elect, Prince Wilhelm, for the good of the country and for the enrichment of the glorious Hohenzollern blood.

The event was celebrated by a grand function at Wigleigh Hall. The baron and his wife fairly oozed triumph. They patronized everybody. The wedding was to take place immediately following Willy's coronation, which was a month distant.

During the ball Schmittty slipped out on the terrace to smoke a cigarette in solitude. I ran into him, and he seized my arm and poured out

ARISTOKIA

his heart-ache. I had had an opportunity to study Gwendolyn, acting as her pilot, he said. What did I think of her? She was terribly Anglo-Saxon, was n't she? She would never consent to his relations with Frieda. He would be horribly henpecked; he knew it. She was an Amazon. I laughed inwardly at this conception of my little Gwendolyn. I tried to comfort poor Willy. I assured him that all would be well; for I was secretly determined that just before the ceremony the bride-elect should mysteriously disappear.

There were other forces at work regarding which I was at the time only vaguely cognizant. If I had not been so utterly in love with Gwendolyn and had studied Aristokian politics a bit, I should have observed that there was an opposition to the Royal Blues, and that the permanent leader of the opposition was Prince Juan do Braganza.

Don Juan, as he was generally called, had a tremendous following. Such was his magnetism that even the army of wronged husbands of his own making were numbered among his staunchest

ARISTOKIA

adherents. It was said in Aristokia that Juan could take away your wife and make you thank him for it, he did it so graciously.

There is no doubt that Prince do Braganza would have made an exceedingly popular emperor. Unfortunately, a Russian ballet-dancer had become entangled in the upper branches of his family tree. This little incident in the sentimental career of one of his ancestors rendered him ineligible for the imperial office.

This limitation to his ambitions was a thorn in the side of Juan. For many years he had been waging a fruitless campaign to induce the obdurate Royal Blues to overlook the dash of the terpsichorean in his blood. They realized that to alter the law would be to end the supremacy of the Teutonic princes.

Juan was not merely an exquisite, though he was that *par excellence*. He was also a warm-blooded Latin, a fire-eater, quick-witted and brilliant, but inordinately vain, excessively dignified, and totally lacking in a sense of humor. He loathed the Germans not merely because they



He seized my arm and poured out his heart-ache

ARISTOKIA

blocked his ambitions but because he could not understand them. Poor Willy he called "the Fish."

When the Royal Blues decided that Willy should marry Gwendolyn, Juan raised a storm of protest. To appease him they created the new title of Marshal of Aristokia, which they conferred on him. With the title went privileges and powers second only to those of the emperor.

It was not customary in Aristokia for an engaged girl to be seen in public with any man other than her fiancé. Juan had been showing marked attention to Gwendolyn and he continued to do so despite her betrothal to Willy. He claimed this as one of the prerogatives of Marshal of Aristokia.

It then became my painful duty to take Juan and Gwendolyn for long flights in her airplane. In order to hear what they were saying I would fly to a great height, shut off the engine, and soar about.

One day Juan calmly informed her that he was tired of breaking up homes and winning

ARISTOKIA

duels; that he intended to settle down and get married, and that it was Gwendolyn whom he intended to marry. I waited breathlessly to hear what she would say.

"Juan, I'll marry you,"—I almost upset the plane,—“the day you become Emperor of Aristokia.”

"Is that a bargain?" he asked eagerly.

"On my word of honor," replied Gwendolyn. "Smith!"

"Yes, your Ladyship?" I managed to say.

"You hear that? You are the witness."

"Yes, your Ladyship."

What the devil was the inscrutable Gwendolyn up to, I wondered. After we left Juan at his palace, I asked her if she was trying to make me jealous. She looked at me roguishly and laughed.

"I'm going to become Empress of Aristokia."

"By marrying Juan? You can do that by marrying Willy." Of the two, I much preferred Willy.

ARISTOKIA

"No, I mean empress in my own right, with you as my consort," she added.

"You're mad, Gwendolyn. It's impossible."

"Nothing is impossible," she said with utter conviction.

She made me promise to help her. If Gwendolyn had said, "Get me the moon," I would have tried.

As the first step in her plans she sent me to see Prince Juan, to put myself at his disposal, and to tell him all I knew about Willy's secret conduct.

Gwendolyn had previously informed Juan that Boswell and I were one and the same person. She explained my strange actions and my presence in her house with a marvelous lie, which Juan, ordinarily the most skeptical of men, swallowed whole because Gwendolyn had told it to him. In life there is always some one person whom even the most confirmed doubting Thomas trusts, and usually it is this one who betrays him. Gwendolyn's story had it that I was a super-spy

ARISTOKIA

engaged by her to gather information detrimental to the prestige of individual Royal Blues.

So it was in this rôle that I went to see Prince Juan and told him about Willy and Frieda, feeling like a traitor the while.

On my arrival at the Braganza Palace I was ushered into the prince's study, an exquisite room, just then filled with books, pell-mell all over the place. While I waited for the prince,—he was in his dressing-room making his tenth change of uniform that day,—I looked at the books. "The Life of Napoleon," "Napoleon the Third," "Napoleon the Little," "The History of a Crime," "The Russian Revolution," "The Portuguese Revolt," "The Coup d'Etat in France"—these were a few of the titles. It was easy to gather their significance. Juan was planning a bloodless revolt, a *coup d'état*.

He came in dressed in a soft gray uniform, his study uniform, he explained to me. Its tones were an aid to thought. He made me sit down and offered me a cigarette. He was cordial and charming. He smilingly recalled our previous

ARISTOKIA

meeting when I had been Boswell, and commented tolerantly on the baron's eccentricities. He admired and eulogized my disguise, advising that the baron must never know that I was Boswell. I agreed with him, as the baron was not a party to the conspiracy and, moreover, wanted Gwendolyn to marry Willy. The mere mention of this matter sent Juan into a tirade of fine irony.

Suddenly he looked at me.

"Do you know, Smith, I suspected you of being a vulgar tourist in love with Lady Gwendolyn."

He laughed, and showed even white teeth. I laughed, too. It was a good joke.

He outlined his plans to me. The technic of the thing was absurdly simple. One merely eliminated all the opposing elements at the psychological moment, and then was acclaimed emperor by the balance of the people, who were favorable and who had been duly rehearsed in their spontaneous demands.

On the eve of Willy's coronation I was to induce him to pay Frieda a farewell visit. She was to give him an overdose of garlic, onions,

ARISTOKIA

and sauerkraut and make him miss his appointment with his crown. That much was easy.

“But what about the Royal Blues?” I asked the prince.

His plans for them were delightful. He told me that Princes Romanoff and Bonaparte, both Royal Blues, were with us, Romanoff for purely personal reasons. The Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs mutually controlled the Royal Blues, and they had consistently elected members of their own families to the throne and kept the Romanoffs out. Nicholas as the head of that family resented this and was determined on revenge. Bonaparte found a *coup d'état* an irresistible temptation on its own merits or demerits. Had not his illustrious ancestors all but invented the art? He was willing to concede the leading part in the impending drama to Juan because he knew that Braganza's tremendous popularity insured the success of a scheme which would unhorse the Germans, whom the Frenchmen loathed whole-heartedly.

ARISTOKIA

Prince Romanoff was to give a party exclusively for Royal Blues. It was to be a stag affair in the "Babylonian District," as a certain part of the city was called. The queen of the district at that time was a French woman whose pseudonym was "The Lily." The Lily was desperately in love with Juan. She would die for him, "many terrible deaths," she had said. So the Lily was to be enlisted as special hostess for the occasion. It was to be a *bal masqué*, which all the Royal Blues would attend and regarding which they would be very circumspect in the matter of publicity. Once they were there, it would be merely a matter of keys and guards to hold them.

Of the remaining elements the vast majority was overwhelmingly for Juan; for each man in the country realized that if Juan could become emperor, it would establish a precedent and let down barriers, so that he, too, might achieve the great office.

On the morning of the great day the entire

ARISTOKIA

city was to be placarded with notices signed by the marshal, informing the public that by leaving the country Willy had abdicated his rights to the throne, and that the Royal Blues had disgraced themselves and the nation by their orgies, for the good people were to be told, with glowing details, of this escapade. The army was to assemble in the great square of the palace. Juan was to review them; that was a part of the regular coronation ceremony. At a given signal from Prince Bonaparte, the ranking royalty and only Royal Blue present, they were to go wild with enthusiasm and acclaim Juan the emperor. Napoleon would point out that, according to the imperial by-laws, on this day and at this hour a ruler *must* be elected; the clergy and the women would be appealed to on ethical grounds to denounce the flagrant immoralities of the absent Royal Blues. Juan would then take the crown from the paralyzed archbishop in truly Napoleonic manner, the master of ceremonies would kiss him on the cheek, and he would be emperor! Could anything have been simpler?

ARISTOKIA

To my amazement the *coup d'état* ran like a well-oiled machine, without a groan or a creak. There was only one hitch, but that hitch is the crux of my story.

CHAPTER XII

THE Lily of the Babylonian District had a key to Juan's liaison door, which was located on the roof of his house and led by a spiral staircase directly into his bedroom.

I got the key from the Lily. I gave it to Gwendolyn. And thereby hangs the tale.

Juan had placed me in charge of all the menials of his establishment. When he had retired for the night on the eve of the great day, I marshaled them together and sent them all off on various futile errands.

Juan himself laid out his coronation uniform with meticulous care, and then disrobed slowly, his mind obsessed with the glories of the morrow. He donned his old-fashioned, cutaway nightgown in which he always slept, and in which he was not a thing of beauty. He was standing thus attired when suddenly Gwendolyn appeared before him. She had entered by the liaison door.

ARISTOKIA

"Gwendolyn!" he cried, "what are you doing here?" He clutched a military cape wildly and draped it over himself. "Where's your chaperon?" he went on frantically.

Gwendolyn sat down in an easy-chair with the nonchalance of one making an afternoon call.

"How funny you look, Juan!" He grabbed the exquisite coat of his wondrous coronation uniform and, sinking into a chair, flung it over his ciliated limbs.

"Where is your chaperon?" he repeated.

"You know that big elm up on the hill?" she asked, watching him with intense amusement. "Well, I was flying very low. Fräulein got caught in the branches. She's probably climbed down by now. Don't worry about her, Juan. She's an agile little creature."

"I don't give a damn about her! It's you I'm thinking of. Do you realize what you have done?"

Gwendolyn ignored him and continued sweetly: "Some day after we are married I will have Fräulein climb for you, Juan dear."

ARISTOKIA

"I don't want to see her climb, and we shall never be married." He was petulant.

Gwendolyn rose and clutched her bosom with a dramatic gesture.

"Juan, not marry me! What are you saying?"

He held his head in his hands and rocked it sidewise.

"Ah, *queridisima*, I loved you so! Why have you done this terrible thing? You have spoilt my glorious day for me! Ah, frailty, thy name is woman! Could you not have waited twenty-four little hours? To-morrow we were to have been married. My charms are a curse! I am so irresistible! But I had thought that *you*, you at least—oh, *queridisima! queridisima!*"

Gwendolyn threw back her head and laughed.

"Don't laugh, Madame!" he exclaimed tragically, jumping up in outraged dignity, forgetting his bare legs and his beautiful coat, which lay crumpled at his feet. "Don't laugh! Do you realize what you are?"

ARISTOKIA

"What am I, Juan?" she asked with unalloyed wonder and innocence.

"You have come to my rooms at midnight, unchaperoned. In the eyes of the world you are a fallen woman."

"But the world need never know, Juan."

"Ah, but it *will* know," he persisted. "It has some subtle way of always finding out these things. How can an emperor marry you now? Madame, you are *ruined!*"

"But, Juan dear, you know I'm not ruined. *You* will tell them," she said softly, "and they will believe an *emperor.*"

Juan staggered. He nearly fainted.

"What you ask me is too much, too much! I would willingly die for you, *queridisima*, but not that!"

"But why not, Juan?" she argued.

"No, no," he said, with the emphasis of a man putting away a frightful temptation to commit some dishonorable act, "it cannot be. If you are in my rooms and escape unharmed, what is to become of my reputation? *I*, the Don Juan, the

ARISTOKIA

gay Lothario—I should be the laughing-stock of Aristokia. There are some things that a man of honor, and a gentleman, that a great prince, cannot do even for the woman he loves. What you ask is impossible.”

There followed a weighty pause.

Gwendolyn then gave a perfectly good imitation of a woman who has fainted. This new development caused Juan abject discomfiture. He took one of her limp hands in his and patted it helplessly.

She half opened one eye.

“Water!” she murmured.

Juan went to the bath-room to get some. The moment his back was turned, Gwendolyn sprang up, and leaping stealthily, closed the door and locked it. Juan was a prisoner in his own bath-room.

Then she came to the foot of the spiral staircase and called me down into the room.

When Juan found himself locked in he pleaded with Gwendolyn, then he called loudly. He shouted, and pounded the door. He tried to

ARISTOKIA

break it down, but it was too well built. He called Gwendolyn every name under the sun, and when he had exhausted all the possibilities of English, he lapsed into the more expressive Portuguese, in which he swore vociferously—beautiful, succulent oaths, richly blooming with luscious vowels, and thunderously reverberant oaths filled with thorny r's. Then he hissed a pell-mell of s's and z's. Like a waterfall they came, toppling over one another. It was a great performance.

Meanwhile Gwendolyn and I went about silently, carefully and methodically collecting certain things. We bundled our stolen goods together and flew away.

But long before we left the fury of the storm in the bath-room had subsided, and only an occasional, distant, muttering rumble broke the silence of exhaustion.

Toward dawn, at the risk of his life, Juan climbed out of the bath-room window, and, groping his way along the narrow cornice, entered his bedroom by smashing a pane of glass.

ARISTOKIA

Rage had given place, through the long vigil of the night, to a quiet determination to beat this counter-conspiracy, whatever it might be. Nothing could stop him from being emperor, he told himself.

He began to dress with all his accustomed care. When he was ready to put on his trousers he could not find them. His whole coronation uniform had disappeared. So that was the plot—to deprive him of the pleasure of wearing his beautiful, artistic creation on which a genius had labored for a month! It was a petty revenge, just like a woman. Though he was chagrined, he could rise above such things. Distasteful as it was to him, he could wear one of his other uniforms.

He got out the coat of the uniform he had worn to the ball at the Wigleights. The trousers were missing. He swore softly. He got out the coat of another and another and *another*, and always the trousers were missing. He pulled out the coats of his ninety-nine uniforms, but we had done our work well. Every pair of trousers was

ARISTOKIA

gone. Juan became frantic. He began to rave like a maniac. He pulled things about in chaotic confusion in his frenzied quest for trousers.

After an hour of vain searching the will to conquer was still dominant. He would borrow a pair of trousers from one of the servants. Mother of Heaven, that he should come to this! But he would do it. During a noble reign he could perhaps live it down.

There were no servants. The house was empty, and nowhere could he find a pair of trousers. A terrible fear seized him. He tried the wireless to get into communication with his followers, but I had it put out of commission before leaving.

"God of my fathers, *incommunicado* and trouserless!" he cried in anguish. His fear and sense of defeat settled on him in a black shroud of dull despair.

Ten thousand curses on the family tradition that had made him adhere to the wearing of nightgowns! He could at least have gone in

ARISTOKIA

pajamas. But how could *he*, the best-dressed man in Aristokia, attend his coronation in underwear! He had been most foully betrayed. It was the end of his glorious career. A man without trousers is a man undone.

Then self-pity seized him, and he sat, an abject figure in flannel underwear, and sobbed.

Meanwhile Juan's *coup d'état* was running its appointed course with the immutability of the stars in their orbits.

The army assembled in the great square of the palace, but instead of Juan to review them, there appeared in the full regalia of his coronation uniform a radiant creature with hair of tarnished gold.

As she sprang lightly and gracefully to the coronation platform, her every movement proclaiming the glory of her freedom and emancipation from petticoats, the buzz of fifty thousand voices died away like the murmur of a breeze, and an intense, expectant silence fell upon the great square.

She spoke in clear, ringing tones. Like crys-

ARISTOKIA

tallized sound her words fell on the ears of the multitude.

“My Lords and Ladies of Aristokia, Prince Wilhelm has by his absence at this august moment abdicated his right to the imperial throne. The Royal Blues are debauching with scarlet women. Prince Juan do Braganza cannot come to you. Some one with a knowledge of his limitations has robbed him of his trousers. Mere man that he is, he dare not appear before you without them. Mere woman that I am, I have dared to come to you in them. Judge, oh, great people, if I am not more qualified than he to reign over you!”

A thrilling pause, and then the tumult broke. Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte had given the signal. From the throats of ten thousand generals, colonels, captains, and a very few young lieutenants a mighty roar arose. Even the rented privates joined in the shouting. The army of Aristokia acclaimed Gwendolyn empress. Somewhere within each man there stirred the primordial desire to be ruled by a woman.

ARISTOKIA

Bonaparte was as surprised as any one at the outcome of his *coup d'état*, but the change in leading characters greatly pleased him. A gallant gentleman, and a Frenchman, he could not refuse a woman anything she asked. And besides, now that Juan's goose was cooked, Napoleon had a vision of himself as Emperor of Aristokia by marriage. He was not alone in possession of such illusions. As each man in the great square gazed at Gwendolyn's loveliness, he saw himself at least the favorite of her court. A wondrous dream of love and power unfolded to each one, as he mingled his voice with his fellows' in lusty cheering.

All about the great plaza, among the civilian population, there were little eddies and whirlpools of confusion and dismay, as shocked and outraged dowagers fainted and plopped their stout persons into the arms of the nearest males. One of the first to pass out was Mama Wigleigh. The baron dropped his monocle for the first time in many years and muttered, "Good God!" with a semblance of real emotion.

ARISTOKIA

Events were moving rapidly. Gwendolyn snatched the imperial crown from the archbishop, who had been gazing at her fondly. The man of God trembled, and muttered a hurried prayer for the salvation of his soul.

The senile and doddering master of ceremonies kissed her lingeringly on each cheek as forty years melted from him. And the thing was done! The *coup d'état* had become a *fait accompli*. Gwendolyn was Empress of Aristokia!

CHAPTER XIII

THE first act of the new monarch was to abrogate the exclusive powers of the Royal Blues and to constitute a few faithful followers her sole advisers. I was admitted to citizenship in Aristokia, and then in the course of a single hour became successively, Sir John Smith Bart., Baron Smith, Viscount Smith, Earl of Capsula, Marquis of Capsula, Duke of Capsula, and finally Prince John. This tedious procedure was necessary, as, according to the imperial by-laws, titles could be conferred only one degree at a time. Fortunately the by-laws had neglected to mention anything about a lapse of time between grades, so we did it as quickly as we could. Baron Wigleigh and his wife were made Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Wigleigh, as became the parents of an empress.

That night at the great coronation ball in the imperial palace Gwendolyn announced that

ARISTOKIA

Prince John was to be her consort. To my utter amazement, they swallowed me, an ex-Smith, an ex-pilot, an ex-plebeian, an ex-Nobody, without a murmur. It proved what I have always contended, that in the first days after a ruler's assumption of office he can get away with anything.

Gwendolyn had exchanged the uniform for an alluring gown. She was the incarnation of delectable femininity. The men vied with one another in their expressions of loyalty and admiration. The women accepted the inevitable as graciously as possible, for they feared her. Even the once all-powerful Royal Blues came and knelt at her feet and asked forgiveness for their misdeeds, for Prince Romanoff had made their acceptance of the new order the *sine qua non* of their release.

Juan did not appear. He was under a physician's care. He had been found wandering about in his underwear, one side of his face badly scorched. He had tried to commit suicide, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that the

ARISTOKIA

International permitted only blank cartridges in Aristokia.

He sent Gwendolyn this note:

Madame, I humbly salute the great office Your Majesty holds, but we Braganzas never forget.

When every one had left, and the royal family was alone,—that is to say, mama, papa, Gwendolyn, and I,—we had a quiet celebration to ourselves.

The baron and his wife had quickly recovered from their first shock, and were now basking in the warmth of their reflected honors. During the ball the baron, or, rather, the grand duke, had barely grunted a greeting to any one below the rank of prince. But now he slapped me on the back and treated me with effusive cordiality.

Although I had shaved my beard, he seemed not to recognize me. He called me “your Highness,” and told me his pet hobby was heraldry, and suggested that if I would do him the honor, he would be glad to help me choose an appropriate coat of arms.

ARISTOKIA

"I'm so glad you followed my suggestion and took Capsula as your family name," he said. "It will enable us to create a most interesting coat of arms. Every good coat of arms, ancient or modern, is based on the thing which brought the family prominence and elevated it to the peerage. All the devices you see in heraldry are symbols of some service performed by the owner of the device for the sovereign. The more elaborate coats of arms, if you can translate their insignia, become veritable graphic histories of the families that use them."

Papa was warming to his pet subject. He fixed his monocle in his characteristic way, ignored his wife's intimation that they should leave, and proceeded:

"If we wish to keep the spirit of the thing, it would be absurd for us of the newer nobility to adopt lions, eagles, battle-axes, griffins, gauntlets, and all such medieval paraphernalia. Our coats of arms should be created in the same fashion as was the older heraldry. I suggest for your Royal Highness a large gold capsule, rampant

ARISTOKIA

on a field of azure. Blue is spaciousness—the world. Gold, wealth. The capsule could be divided into little sections, each containing some smaller symbol representing strength, health, and life. Then you should have a motto. It should be in some foreign language which you don't understand."

"I don't understand any," I said. "You have the field to choose from."

"I think Spanish is as silly-sounding as any of them," remarked the baron, "and the Marlboroughs have a Spanish motto. 'De mal gusto, pero comestible,' would look well."

"What does it mean?" I asked.

"It is truthful," he said, with an odd twinkle in his eyes. "And the fact that you chose it for your motto will add to your fame wherever capsules are used."

I suspected that the baron was spoofing me with this cryptic reply. I secured a translation, and then I knew it; for this was my motto, "Of bad taste, but edible."

As I talked with the baron I became convinced

ARISTOKIA

that he did not remember me, and as he said good night to me almost with affection and with a trace of the father-in-law-to-be in his manner, I could not help musing on the extraordinary vagaries of his mind.

In the doorway he stood aside a moment while a blissfully bewildered grand duchess endangered her equilibrium by a farewell curtsy to her empress daughter. The baron (I cannot think of him as the grand duke) bowed low, and then, returning to an upright posture, a look almost of boyish amusement on his face, said, "The greatest honor of my life will always be that your Royal Highness was once my Boswell!"

Two flunkies drew the great tapestried portières and departed. Gwendolyn and I were alone at last except for the three imperial chaperons, for we were not yet married.

She was exultant with victory. I tried as tactfully as I could to point out to her that it could not last. Juan would be revenged. Even Bonaparte and Romanoff, friendly as they

ARISTOKIA

seemed, might not long remain so. She had shown the way. From then on there would be a succession of revolutions in Aristokia. Gwendolyn denied it vehemently. Every one adored her. She insisted that she could handle Juan and the others.

"I believe you can hold them indefinitely, Gwendolyn, if you remain a virgin queen," I said; "but not if you marry me. You must choose between empire and love. You cannot have both. No one has ever had both."

"But I can't live without you," she said, drawing me close to her.

"Then you must give this up," I replied, gently withdrawing from her embrace. I wanted to keep my senses if I could. "Come away with me, darling, to America," I pleaded. "There are greater victories awaiting us there, perhaps not so spectacular, but bigger, deeper, more lasting."

Those last few days of intense activity had rekindled my slumbering ambitions. I was fired with new hope, courage, and determination. I

ARISTOKIA

had learned a great lesson in Aristokia, and I was eager to apply it in the world beyond.

For more than an hour I pleaded with Gwendolyn to go with me and help me to right the wrongs of humanity; to give her great inspiration to my life work, to undo the bungling mistakes of the would-be reformers of the early twentieth century. But her mind and heart were fixed on golden days in Aristokia.

I said good night and left, pretending to submit to her will. I had decided on action.

I flew to Saal and found Willy contentedly munching food as usual. I began my confession humbly. He silenced me.

"Smithy, you have done me a great favor. I can never repay you. I am going to stay here always and help Frieda run the inn, and eat her food," he added.

"But your throne, Willy—"

He laughed.

"Emperor of Aristokia, by grace of the workers of the world!" he said derisively. "No, Smithy.

ARISTOKIA

My great-grandfather said, 'World dominion or downfall' when he started the Great War. He lost, and I have no choice but downfall—with Frieda."

And so I left him, the last of the Hohenzollerns, happily eating sauer-kraut.

I returned to the imperial palace, my mind made up.

To understand my next move, you must remember that I was at that time an assiduous student of the dramatic literature of the Broadway period. I knew my Bayard Veillers, my Max Marcin, George Scarborough, and Samuel Shipman by heart. In this emergency I knew I should resort to "knock-out drops." But I had none. Failing this classic remedy, I used the modern substitute: as Gwendolyn slumbered sweetly, I hypnotized her.

While she was in this state of hypnosis I made her sign the articles of abdication that I had prepared. I myself left the following valedictory for the people of Aristokia.

ARISTOKIA

There is only one person temperamentally fitted and mentally equipped to rule over you, His Royal Highness the Grand Duke George of Wigleigh.

I signed it royally, "JOHN."

I then strapped Gwendolyn into my plane and flew away with her, leaving Aristokia to awake to a day of chaos.

CHAPTER XIV

WE flew southward over the snowy battlements of the Alps; over the quiet, smiling fields of France; the Pyrenees; Spain; Portugal.

Late in the afternoon I brought the machine to rest on a sandy stretch of beach on the Portuguese coast. I had not awakened Gwendolyn, for I knew the deep hypnotic sleep was a balm to her tired nerves. I myself was exhausted, so I snatched three hours' sleep, which sufficiently refreshed me to continue the journey.

During the long night I flew westward over the Atlantic at a terrific speed. I was far south of the regular transatlantic routes and sighted few other planes. I passed over the most westerly of the Azores at about midnight.

When the dawn came, a vast sea of rolling, billowy cloud lay beneath us. The gray rim of the world was touched here and there with the

ARISTOKIA

lavender and pale pink of nascent day. Shafts of flame shot through the clouds, and we seemed to be flying over the crater of an immense volcano filled with seething lava.

As the sun climbed higher, the clouds rose up in wreaths and spirals, white, ghostly figures whirling with outstretched, tapering arms to the sky. Vapor enfolded us. Then far beneath, through the cañons of mist, the sea appeared, blue-green, sinuous, restless, and reptilian. I flew lower. The ocean was a shattered mirror in the sunlight.

The day wore on. As the sun set, the white towers of New York appeared. It had been a record trip even for me, five thousand miles in thirty-six hours.

We passed over Staten Island, over the Monument of Freedom, that colossal piece of sculpture designed by the great American Barnard, and erected to symbolize the freedom of the world.

I circled around the great figures, a man and woman, both nude, the man, brute strength with

ARISTOKIA

a face that dreamed; the woman, joyous, half-bacchante, half-madonna, holding aloft a child. From their sides gigantic chains went crashing downward, and at their feet, sinking into the rock, were crowns, scepters, money-bags, the little figures of tyrants and capitalists; broken swords, rifles, and cannon, the wreckage of a world militarism.

It was a glorious conception, but what a mockery! I thought. This freedom it personified did not exist. Like all great works of art, Barnard's masterpiece was ahead of the facts of life.

We passed over the old Statue of Liberty. I suppose it, too, had been ahead of the thing it symbolized.

Then New York! My blood tingled as I flew uptown, high above the top tier of Broadway. Already at that date the third level was devoted entirely to auto-ped traffic, and the middle of the street was filled with tiny black figures rushing northward. The north-bound moving platforms were also crowded, the south-bound, desolate. Same old New York!

ARISTOKIA

Gwendolyn, whom I had awakened early in the morning that she might see the sunrise, was gazing at the city beneath her, awestruck.

"It's a great sight when you see it for the first time, is n't it?" I shouted.

Perhaps she did n't hear me, for she did n't answer. All day she had not opened her lips except to swallow some of my despised capsules.

I shut off the engine and volplaned gently downward, coming to rest in a great grassy space.

"Where are we?" murmured Gwendolyn.

"Van Cortlandt Park, in the center of New York city," I answered her.

She turned to me with truly Aristokian disregard of the gaping bystanders, threw her arms about my neck, and kissed me ecstatically, crooning, "Jacky, you darling! I'm so happy! I always wanted you to bring me here this way. I love you so! You are wonderful!"

The crowd of idlers giggled. These four-hour day laws have just filled New York with people with nothing to do, I thought angrily as I lifted Gwendolyn out.

ARISTOKIA

I checked the machine, and we hurried to the nearest registrar's office, at the busy corner of Broadway and 242nd Street. We passed the physical examination with flying colors, secured our license, and were legally mated within an hour.

In the years that followed, our great happiness was slightly marred by the disappointments I encountered. I was still young, and had not learned that the world cannot be reformed by one man, in a day or in a century.

I am an old man now as I write this record of my youthful romance and adventure. The flame of impatient enthusiasm that burned in my veins fifty years ago has waned and died out, and in its place are peace and understanding.

I have seen many changes, much astounding progress; and yet the millennium is as far off to-day as no doubt it seemed one hundred years ago. It will be ever thus, I think. Life's horizon is always the limit of our vision advancing before us as we grope onward—perfection, the ever-present mirage. A century is less than a sec-

ARISTOKIA

ond of time in life's eternal, colossal unfoldment. We individual units are only minutiae in the Great Being that lives in the spaces of infinity.

How infinitesimal is the accomplishment even of the greatest of us!

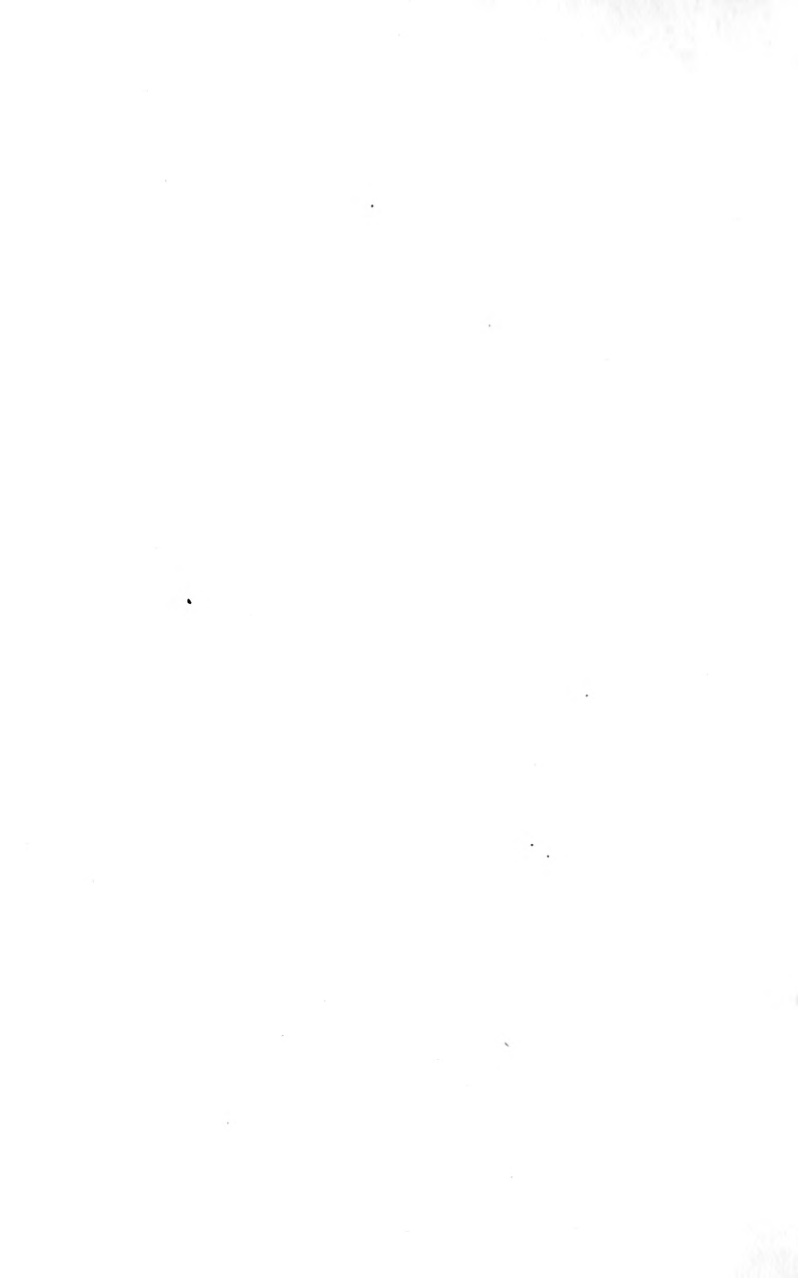
Once long years ago I called myself an "inventor." It is a fatuous word that we have at last discarded, and for which we have substituted the more modest "discoverer." We rearrange the facts at our disposal in some new complexity, that is all.

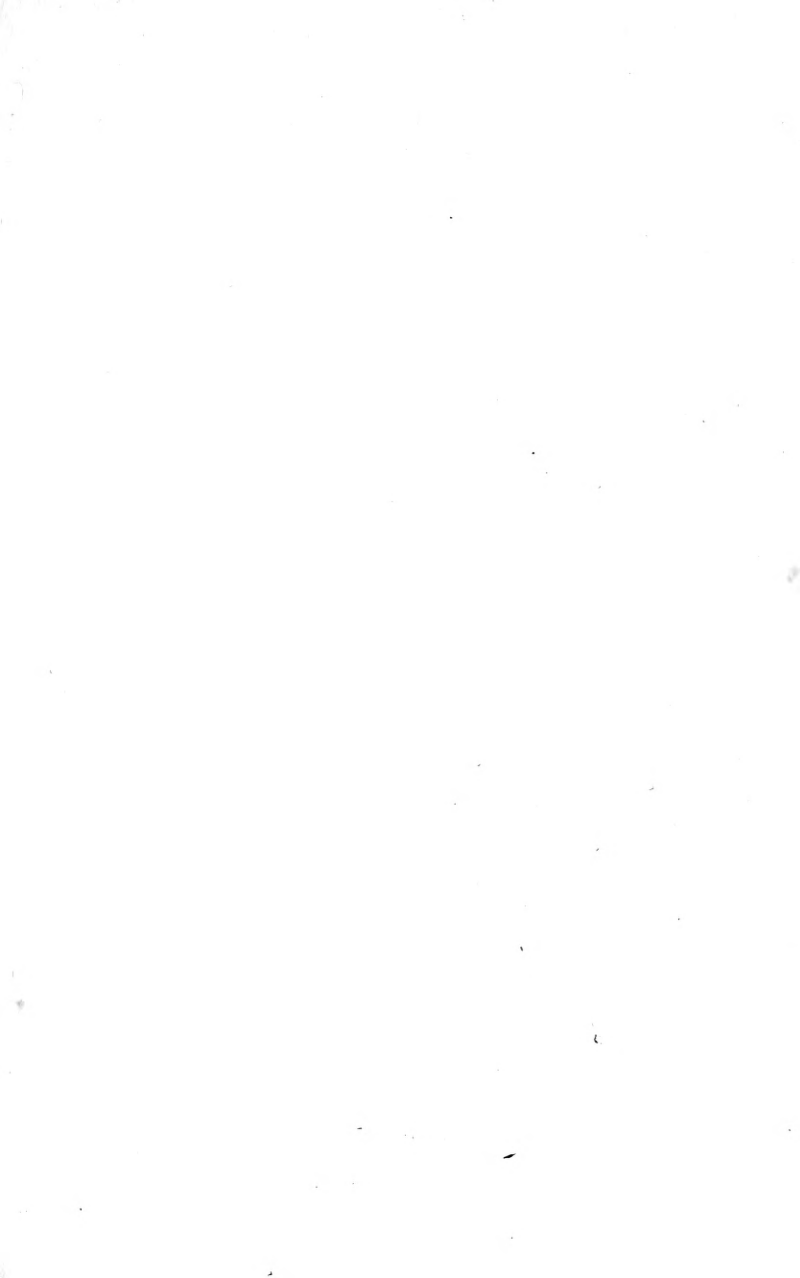
Those of you who still think you can mold the world as if it were potter's clay will call me a pessimist, but I protest. I am an unconquerable optimist. I believe in the ultimate purpose of life. We must strive to understand it and add our mite in the right direction. If we fail, life will smash us and pass us by.

Knowledge and foresight are the great virtues. Look back with me. If only men one hundred years ago had foreseen the Great War; if only my own America had foreseen and prepared for her entrance into the great conflict; if only during the

ARISTOKIA

war men everywhere had foreseen and prepared for the coming of the Revolution or the peace; if only the signing of the armistice had not been a signal for the relegation to the realm of splendid memories of all the moral heroisms born of the war's travail; if only men could have realized, as they argued terms of peace and settlement, that the Great War was only the prologue in a world drama which they thought ended when it had just begun, how different things might be to-day!





34

1-2

12-13

its

Winnipeg - 11

Winnipeg - 11

